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Early Chroniclers of Europe

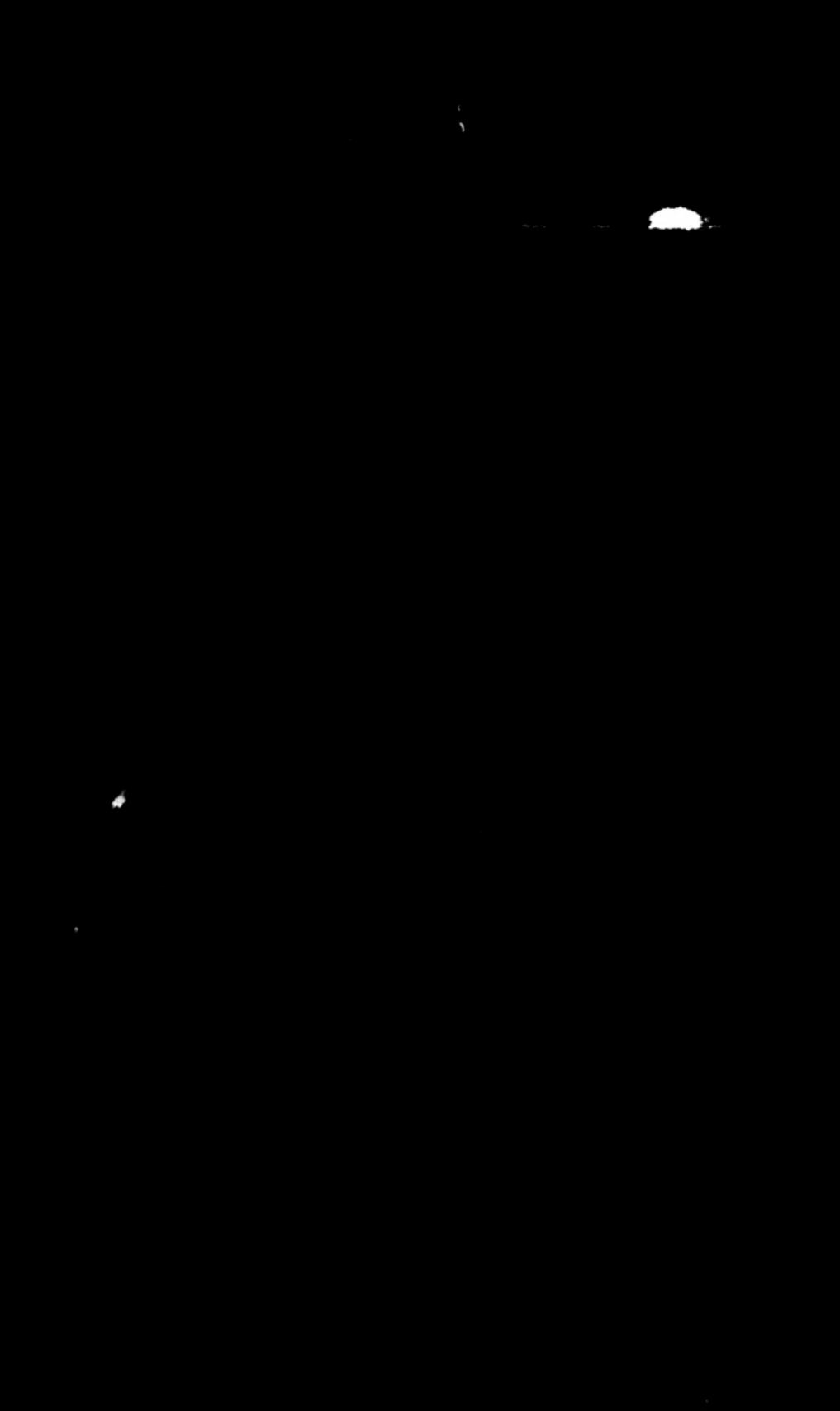
ENGLAND

JAMES GAIRDNER



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EARLY CHRONICLERS OF EUROPE.

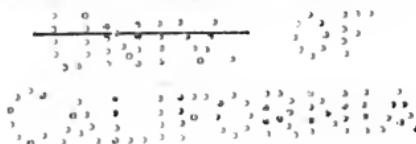
ENGLAND.

BY

JAMES GAIRDNER,

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND REIGN OF RICHARD III,"
"THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK," ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS volume is one of a series intended to popularise the sources of mediæval history, and is specially devoted to the chronicles of our own country. With such an object it is neither possible nor desirable to give an exhaustive account of all our early historians ; but a selection has been made of those writers whose style is most characteristic and whose works are best adapted for quotation. It is for these qualities rather than for their intrinsic value as original authorities that occasionally some of the minor chronicles have been treated at considerable length, while greater and more important works have been barely mentioned or have even been passed over in silence. No attempt, in fact, has been made to preserve proportion as between one writer and another ; but it is hoped that some general idea both of the wealth of mediæval writings illustrative of English history and of their

great variety of character may be obtained from a perusal of these pages.

It is almost needless to say that this work does not profess to be the fruit of great original research. In such a large field it is impossible not to be guided to a very considerable extent by the eyes of others ; and in many instances it will be seen that the author has acknowledged his obligations in the text. No mention, however, has been made of one modern writer to whose work he has been indebted in some portion of Chapter III. ; and he takes this opportunity of referring to Mr. Morison's valuable *Life and Times of St. Bernard*.

A large number of the old English chronicles have in our day been rendered very accessible in the series of cheap English translations published by Bohn. These versions are of unequal merit ; but their publication is certainly a great boon to that reading public who desire to be made better acquainted with the chronicles of the Middle Ages. The extracts in the present volume are occasionally derived from Bohn's translations ; but in many cases the author has thought it better to supply a translation of his own.



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EARLY CHRONICLERS OF EUROPE.

ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

OUR EARLIEST HISTORIANS.

Gildas on the destruction of Britain—Bede's account of the conversion of England to Christianity—Pope Gregory and the English slaves at Rome—King Edwin's consultation with his councillors about embracing Christianity—Paulinus made Bishop of York—King Edwin's good government—Abbey of Whitby—Story of Cædmon—Bede's other writings—Account of his death—Supernatural stories in Bede—Asser's *Life of Alfred the Great*—Questions about the text—Interpolations—The Story of Alfred and the cakes—How Alfred learned to read—How he divided his time.

AFTER the departure of the Romans from Britain, the history of this island is for some time enveloped in great obscurity, which is at the best but faintly relieved by Welsh traditions and unsatisfactory fragments of Welsh poetry. Left to themselves the Britons manifested no native capacity for

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government and relapsed into comparative barbarism. Only about a century after the withdrawal of the conquerors do we meet with a British writer who tells us anything about the Britons; and the picture he gives of their decay and demoralization is melancholy in the extreme.

Nor can it be said that even here our scanty historical information rests on a basis altogether free from controversy. Indeed, the doubts and discussions to which the brief treatise of Gildas has given rise are out of all proportion to its magnitude. As to the personality of the writer it is unsatisfactory to find two ancient biographies utterly inconsistent even with regard to his parentage and family, and manifestly full of fabulous matter throughout. In the absence of better information on this subject, even his age and nationality have been called in question; and though his own testimony upon these points, if trustworthy, is unmistakeable, one daring critic suspects the work to be a forgery of a somewhat later time. Speculations of this kind, however, I shall for my part simply pass by; and as the work is, under any circumstances, anterior to that of our next historian, the Venerable Bede, I will endeavour to give the reader some account of its general drift.

The title which it commonly bears—*Liber querulus de Excidio Britanniæ* (a Book of Complaint touching the Destruction of Britain)—may not have been prefixed by the author himself, but indicates, nevertheless, truly enough its general character.

The work, as it has come down to us, is divided into three sections, the first of which is called “the Preface,” the second, “the History,” and the third “the Epistle.” But it is greatly questioned whether this division is the author’s own, who, according to his most recent editor, called the whole simply an Epistle. In any case it is clear that “the History” is only meant to lead up to “the Epistle,” and that the author’s real aim was not to write a history at all, but to show the fearful degeneracy of the times, and to rebuke the rulers of the British nation for the shameful perfidy with which they dishonoured their Christian profession. In the opening words of “the Epistle” the general state of matters is described as follows :—

“ Britain has kings, but they are tyrants ; she has judges, but impious ones ; often engaged in plunder and rapine, but preying upon the innocent ; avenging and protecting, indeed, but only robbers and criminals. They have an abundance of wives, yet are they addicted to fornication and adultery ; they are ever ready to take oaths, and as often perjure themselves ; they make a vow and almost immediately act falsely ; they make war, but their wars are against their countrymen, and are unjust ones ; they rigorously prosecute thieves throughout the country, but those who sit at table with them are robbers, and they not only cherish but reward them ; they give alms plentifully, but on the other hand they heap up an immense mountain of crimes ; they sit on the seat of justice, but rarely seek for the rule of right judgment ; they despise the innocent and the humble, but seize every occasion of exalting to the utmost the bloody minded, the proud, murderers, the combined and adulterers, enemies of God, who ought to be utterly destroyed and their names forgotten.”

The turgid Latin in which all this is set forth is certainly not to be commended as a model of literary style. It is a sort of decayed Ciceronianism, in which a great multiplicity of hard words is made to do the duty of a few well-ordered and weighty ones. But after all the style itself is only an additional illustration of that which is the main subject of the book—the general decay of civilization, culture, and morality, which had ensued since the Romans left the island. The author is in dead earnest, and uses a great array of heavy words in the hope that some of them may take effect upon the heavy and sluggish intellects of a demoralized people. And from this general statement of the case he proceeds to special instances, attacking the different British princes by name, for their gross immoralities, and finally addressing a general warning to them by examples from Old Testament history, and from the words of the Prophets.

Such was the aim and object of this work of Gildas ; and to treat him as an historian in the ordinary sense of the word is not to do him justice. He was an historian only so far as history lay in his path towards another object ; and as an historian he confesses that he labours under very great disadvantages.

“ I will endeavour,” he says, “ to give an account both of those evils which Britain suffered in the time of the Roman emperors and of those which she inflicted on other citizens afar off ; yet, so far as I shall be able to do it, it will not be so much from the literature of this country or from the memo-

rials of its writers (because, if there ever were such, they have either been destroyed by the fires of the enemy, or carried off by the ships of citizens who went into exile), as from a narrative [supplied to me] beyond sea, which, being interrupted by frequent gaps, is not by any means satisfactory."

In fact, the information possessed by Gildas as to what happened long before his own day was not only scanty, but I must add not much to be relied on. From the analysis of the apparent sources of the work made by Sir Thomas Hardy, we may presume that the earlier part, at least, of the narrative obtained beyond sea consisted of fragments of the writings of Eusebius and St. Jerome relating to Britain, and perhaps of the ecclesiastical history of Sulpicius Severus. If it extended much later it could not have been very trustworthy; for the notions of Gildas, at least as to the order and succession of events, are exceedingly confused and inaccurate, nor are they in harmony with well-informed Greek and Roman writers as to the events themselves. But from the early part of the fifth century Greek and Roman writers tell us nothing of the affairs of Britain, and Gildas is the original authority used by Bede and succeeding writers as the basis of our early English history.* It is he who reports how the Britons, after their abandonment by the Romans, being molested by the Picts and Scots, invoked again their old conquerors and rulers to save them from the barbarians,

* See Sir T. Hardy's remarks in his *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. i. pp. 136, 137.

and wrote to Aëtius the Consul the desponding appeal, headed "the groans of the Britons." The reader is doubtless familiar with the words of that letter as translated by Hume:—"The barbarians, on the one hand, chase us into the sea; the sea, on the other, throws us back on the barbarians; and we have only the hard choice left us of perishing by the sword, or by the waves." It is Gildas, also, who reports how, when the Romans could no longer assist the islanders, the latter un-
wisely met the difficulty by calling in "the fierce and impious Saxons—a race hateful both to God and man, to repel the invasions of the northern nations." On the extreme impolicy and wicked-
ness of this step our author makes severe reflec-
tions. "Nothing," he says, "was ever so pernicious to our country." Its immediate result is described as follows:—"Then a litter of whelps bursting forth from the lair of the barbaric lioness in three *keels* as they call them in their language, or long ships as we should say in ours, with their sails wafted by the wind, and with omens and prophecies favourable, by which it was foretold that they should occupy the country to which they were sailing three hundred years, and half of that time, a hundred and fifty years, should plunder and despoil the same." They landed on the eastern side of the island as allies of the southern natives; but having once obtained a footing they strengthened them-
selves by fomenting the internal dissensions of the islanders. The author goes on to state, though

in obscure and turgid language, that commotions spread from sea to sea, even to the Western ocean, which he regards as the vengeance of the Almighty on the former sins of the inhabitants. But the peculiar horror of these events was the overthrow of Christianity and civilization, recalling the words of the Psalmist, “O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance ; Thy holy temple have they defiled.”* “They have cast fire into Thy sanctuary ; they have defiled the dwelling-place of Thy name.”†

Then following up this figure of speech in a passage which is very obscure, but which has been translated as follows, he goes on to say—

“ So that all the columns were levelled with the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with their bishops, priests, and people, whilst the sword gleamed and the flames crackled around them on every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press, and with no chance of being buried save in the ruins of the houses, or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds ; with reverence be it spoken for their blessed souls, if, indeed, there were many found who were carried at that time into the high heaven by the holy angels. So entirely had the vintage, once so fine, degenerated and become bitter, that in the words of the prophet there was hardly a grape or ear of corn to be seen where the husbandman had turned his back.”

It is added that “of the miserable remnant,”

* Ps. lxxix. 1.

† Ps. lxxiv. 7.

some were taken in the mountains and murdered with great slaughter ; others, oppressed by hunger, gave themselves up as slaves, even at the risk of being slain on the spot ; others escaped beyond sea ; while others succeeded in preserving their lives, though in constant fear and danger, among the mountains, precipices, and forests. Nevertheless, after a time, the islanders took arms under the Roman General Ambrosius Aurelian, who alone of all that nation, it is said, "was by chance left alive in the confusion of that troubled period," and obtained some advantage over their persecutors. The war continued then for some time with varied success, till forty-four years after the landing of the Saxons the islanders gained a decided victory at the battle of Mount Badon, which was followed by some other successes. It was at that time, Gildas tells us, that he himself was born. Yet even to the time at which he wrote the cities were not inhabited as before ; and though the foreign foe had ceased to give trouble civil wars still continued. It was true the remembrance of that horrible desolation and of their unexpected deliverance exercised for a time a beneficial influence upon kings, magistrates, and people, who with their priests and clergy led orderly and decent lives. But after that generation had passed away, the islanders, forgetting everything but their present prosperity, abandoned truth and justice and relapsed into every kind of wickedness, all but a very small company ; so few, says the writer, that our holy mother Church could

hardly see them reposing in her bosom—by whose prayers, nevertheless, as by pillars, the infirmity of the nation was sustained. These things, the author wishes us to understand, he writes not in anger but in pure sorrow ; for it is needless to conceal what foreign nations know and cast in our teeth.

Such is the tenor of this book of Gildas, be it history, epistle, or what it may. A multitude of questions rise up as to the sufficiency of his testimony, the completeness of the Saxon conquest and various other points in connection with it, which we may here dismiss. But no one will doubt the general truth to which this remarkable composition bears witness—that the withdrawal of the Romans and the settlement in the island of the pagan Saxons led to something that might well be called “the destruction of Britain ;” that the new comers made havoc of civilization, and that the early planted Christianity of the Britons, cut off from the Christianity of Europe, became so degenerate and corrupt that it had no influence whatever in mitigating the fury of the conquerors. The absence of all other records on this point only confirms the solitary testimony of Gildas ; for a civilized people always preserves some evidences of its civilization. But here we have no other contemporary documents—no other fruit of that doomed and decaying nationality than this pitiful lament over its decay. In another generation or two the Britons will have ceased to exist as a nation altogether, or ceased, at all events, to be any longer called by that name.

The revival of civilization came again from Rome; not, as at first, by the subjugation of the island by Roman arms, but by an influence still more powerful and more humanizing. The triumphant pagans who now possessed the land learned the tidings of salvation from the preaching of St. Augustine, and became more gentle than the subject race had been in the days of their independence. For the record of the mode in which the change was wrought we are indebted to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*; and it is certainly the most interesting narrative to be found in our early annals. We therefore present it to the reader in the very words of the original author, translated from the Latin:—

“In the year of our Lord 582, Maurice, the fifty-fourth from Augustus, ascended the throne, and reigned twenty-one years. In the tenth year of his reign, Gregory, a man conspicuous for his learning and ability, having attained the pontificate of the Roman Apostolic See, ruled it for thirteen years, six months, and ten days; who, being warned by a divine instinct, in the fourteenth year of the same emperor, and about the one-hundred and fiftieth after the coming of the English into Britain, sent the servant of God, Augustine, and several others along with him, monks who feared the Lord, to preach the word of God to the English nation. But when in obedience to the Pope's commands they had begun to take that work in hand, and had proceeded some way upon the journey, they were seized with a sluggish fear, and thought rather to return home than go to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation, whose language even they did not understand; and this they all agreed was the safer course. And straightway they sent home Augustine, whom he had determined to appoint their bishop if they were received by

the English, to obtain leave of the blessed Gregory by humble supplications, that they should not undertake so dangerous, toilsome, and uncertain a journey. The pope sent them a letter of exhortation persuading them to go forward in the work, relying on the aid of the divine Word ; of which letter the tenor was as follows :—

“ Gregory, the servant of the servants of God. Forasmuch as it had been better not to begin a good work than in thought to desist from that which is begun, it behoves you, my beloved sons, by all means to complete the good work which with the Lord’s aid you have entered upon. Let not therefore the toil of the journey nor the tongues of men who speak evil deter you ; but with all assiduity and fervour accomplish the things which, prompted by God, you have commenced, knowing that the glory of an eternal reward follows a great labour. Obey in everything your chief Augustine who is returning to you, and whom I appoint to you as abbot, knowing that whatever shall be effected by you according to his direction will be in every way for the advantage of your souls. Almighty God protect you by His grace, and grant that I may in the eternal country see the fruit of your labour ; so that, although I cannot labour with you, I shall be found along with you in the joy of the reward, because at least I desire to labour. God keep you in safety, my most beloved sons. Given on the 10th of the kalends of August (23rd July) in the fourteenth year of the reign of our most pious and august lord, the Emperor Mauritius Tiberius, the thirteenth year after the consulate of our said lord, Indiction* xiv.”

“ The same venerable Pope then sent also a letter to \mathcal{A} etherius, archbishop of Arles, that he should give a kind reception to Augustine on his way to Britain ; of which letter this was the tenor :—

* The Indictions were another mode of reckoning years. They took in a cycle of fifteen years, the successive years being numbered Indiction I., Indiction II., and so forth, to Indiction XV., after which the numbers were repeated, beginning again with Indiction I.

“To his most reverend and most holy brother and fellow-bishop Ætherius, Gregory servant of the servants of God.

“Although with priests who have the charity which is well pleasing to God, religious men stand in need of no man's recommendation, yet as a fitting opportunity of writing offers itself, we have determined to send our letters to your brotherhood,* intimating that we have sent thither for the good of souls the bearer of these presents, Augustine, the servant of God, of whose assiduity we are assured, with other servants of God besides, whom it is needful that your holiness hasten to assist with sacerdotal zeal and afford him comfort. And that you may be the more ready to grant him assistance, we have enjoined him particularly to relate to you the cause, being assured that when it is fully known to you, you will apply yourself for the love of God to grant him succour, for the case requires it. We also commend to your charity in all things Candidus the priest, our common son, whom we have sent for the government of a small patrimony in our church. God preserve thee in safety, most reverend brother. Given on the 10th of the kalends of August (23rd July) in the fourteenth year of the reign of our lord the Emperor Mauritius Tiberius, the thirteenth year after the consulship of the same lord, Indiction xiv.”

“Thus strengthened by the confirmation of the blessed Father Gregory, Augustine, with the servants of Christ who went along with him, returned to the work of the Word, and arrived in Britain. At that time Ethelbert was king in Kent, a most powerful sovereign who had extended his sway to the confines of the great river Humber, by which the southern and the northern peoples of the English are divided. On the Eastern side of Kent is Thanet, an island not very small,—that is to say of the magnitude of 600 families, according to the customary computation of the English,—which is divided

* It will be observed that “your brotherhood” (a title which sounds rather unconventional in English) and “your holiness” were modes of address used at this time even by the chief bishop of Christendom in addressing other bishops.

from the mainland by the river Wantsum, about three furlongs (*stadia*) in breadth* and fordable only in two places, for either end of it runs into the sea. On this island landed Augustine, the servant of God, and his companions, a company, it is said, of nearly forty men. They had by order of the blessed Pope Gregory taken interpreters of the nation of the Franks, and sending to Ethelbert, Augustine informed him that he had come from Rome, and brought the best possible of tidings, which promised those who obeyed the message eternal joy in heaven, and a kingdom that would be without end with the living and true God. Hearing this he commanded them to remain in that island where they had landed, and that all necessaries should be supplied to them, until he should consider what to do with them; for the fame of the Christian religion had already reached him, as he had a Christian wife of the nation of the Franks, by name Bertha, whom he had received from her parents, on the condition that she should be allowed to continue without interruption the rite of her religion with a bishop whom they had given her to assist her faith, whose name was Luidhard. Some days later, accordingly, the king came to the island, and sitting in the open air, commanded Augustine and his companions to come and confer with him. For he had taken the precaution that they should not come to him in any house, lest according to an old superstition if they practised any magical arts they might impose upon him, and so get the better of him. But they came furnished with divine, not with magic virtue, bearing a silver cross for a banner, and a figure of our Lord and Saviour painted in a picture, and singing litanies petitioned the Lord for the eternal salvation alike of themselves and of those on whose account and to whom they had come. And when at the king's command they had sat down, and preached the Word of life to him and all his attendants there present, he replied, 'Your words are

* The stream which divides Thanet from the rest of Kent is in our day extremely narrow, and is called the Stour; but in Bede's time it formed a very broad channel, and was called the Wantsum.

fair, and the promises you bring, but as they are new and uncertain, I cannot give my assent to them and relinquish the customs that I have so long observed along with the whole English nation. But as you are travellers who have come a long distance hither, and, as I believe I apprehend your meaning, you are desirous to communicate to us the things which you yourselves believe to be true and excellent, we will not molest you, but rather give you favourable entertainment and take care to supply you with things necessary for your support ; nor do we forbid you to preach and gain as many as you can to the faith of your religion.' He accordingly gave them an abode in the city of Canterbury, which was the capital of all his kingdom, and, as he had promised, along with the supply of temporal food did not refuse them liberty of preaching. It is reported also that as they drew near the city, after their manner, with the image of the great king our Lord Jesus Christ, they sang in concert this litany, 'We beseech Thee, O Lord, in all Thy mercy, that Thy fury and Thine anger be turned away from this city, and from Thy holy house, for we have sinned. Hallelujah.'

"As soon as they entered the dwelling-place assigned to them they began to imitate the apostolic life of the primitive Church ; serving that is to say, with constant prayers, watchings, and fastings ; preaching the word of life to whom they could ; despising the things of this world as not their own, accepting only the things which seemed necessary for sustenance from those whom they instructed ; living themselves in all respects according to what they taught, and with a mind prepared to suffer any adversity or even to die for the truth they preached. In short, some believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their innocent life, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine. Now there was near that city, on the east side, a church raised of old in honour of St. Martin, when the Romans as yet inhabited Britain, in which the Queen, who, as we have already mentioned, was a Christian, used to pray. In this, accordingly, they also first began to meet, to sing, to pray, to say masses, to preach and

to baptize, until, the king being converted to the faith, they obtained a greater liberty of preaching everywhere and building or restoring churches. But when he also among others, captivated by the unsullied life of the holy men and with their most delightful promises, the truth of which they confirmed by the exhibition of many miracles, believed and was baptized, greater numbers began daily to pour in to hear the word, and, forsaking their heathen rites, to associate themselves by believing to the unity of the Holy Church of Christ ; whose faith and conversion the king so far encouraged, as that he compelled none to embrace Christianity, but only showed greater affection to believers as fellow-citizens with him in the kingdom of heaven ; for he had learned from his teachers and the authors of his salvation that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not enforced. Nor was it long before he gave those teachers a settled residence, suitable to their degree, in Canterbury, his metropolis, with at the same time necessary possessions of divers kinds."

A little later in his history, after recording the death of Pope Gregory, Bede relates the familiar tradition as to the circumstance which first inspired him with the idea of Christianizing the Britons. And though the historian is careful to give it only as a tradition or popular belief, which cannot in any case be considered so certain, or even so worthily characteristic of the pope himself, as the correspondence with St. Augustine, the story is so full of graphic interest, that we reproduce it here as it was originally told.

"Nor is the belief to be passed by in silence which has come down to us by the tradition of our ancestors as to the cause by which St. Gregory was moved to take such unremitting interest in the salvation of our nation. They say that one day certain merchants having lately arrived [at Rome], a

quantity of goods was brought into the market for sale, and many people had resorted thither to buy ; and, among the rest, Gregory himself came and saw, together with other merchandise, some boys exposed for sale, their bodies white, their faces handsome, and their hair remarkably beautiful. And having looked at them, he asked, as they say, from what country or land they had been brought, and was told from the island of Britain, whose inhabitants were of such appearance. Again he asked whether the same islanders were Christians or were still involved in pagan errors, and was told that they were pagans. Then, fetching a deep sigh from the bottom of his heart, 'Alas ! the pity,' said he, 'that the author of darkness should possess men of so bright a countenance, and that persons conspicuous for so much grace of aspect should have minds void of inward grace !' He therefore again asked what was the name of that nation. He was answered that they were called Angles. 'That is well,' said he, 'for they have angelic faces, and such men ought to be co-heirs with the angels in heaven. What is the name,' he said, 'of the province from which they have been brought ?' He was told that the people of that province were called Deiri. 'That is well,' he said again, 'Deiri, withdrawn from wrath (*de irâ*) and called to the mercy of Christ. How is the king of that province named ?' The answer was that he was called *Ælla* ; and he, alluding to the name, said 'Allelujah ! the praise of God the Creator must be sung in those parts. And repairing to the bishop of the Roman and Apostolic see (for he himself had not yet been made pontiff) he asked him to send into Britain to the nation of the Angles some ministers of the Word, by whom they might be converted to Christ, declaring himself ready to undertake the work with the Lord's assistance if only the Pope were pleased that he should do so. Which thing he was not for a while able to perform, because, although the Pope was willing to grant him what he asked, yet the citizens of Rome could not allow him to withdraw so far from the city. Afterwards, when he was himself made Pope, he achieved the work so long desired, sending other

preachers, indeed, but himself aiding by his exhortations and prayers that their preaching should bear fruit."

Thus by the efforts of Gregory and St. Augustine not only were the seeds of true religion sown among a barbarous people, but a hierarchy was established in the land to preserve the fruits that had been sown. For whatever may be said in favour of desultory missionary efforts on which much zeal has undoubtedly been expended in modern times, it is clear that the religion of Christ would have made little progress among our ancestors without an organized society, having intercourse with other societies abroad, and receiving continual encouragement and exhortation from an authority of considerable weight at Rome. Even as it was, there were very serious relapses into idolatry. After Ethelbert's death his son remained for some time a pagan, and became a persecutor, so that almost every minister of Christianity was driven to take refuge abroad. But Bede being a north countryman was specially interested in the story of the conversion of Edwin, king of Northumbria, which was effected partly by the influence of his wife, Ethelberga, the daughter of Ethelbert of Kent. The Pope, at least, wrote her a letter to encourage her efforts in that direction ; but the principal cause of his conversion, according to the historian, was an angelic vision that he remembered having had before he became king, at a time when his life was in great danger from his enemies. In fulfilment of a vow which he then made, Paulinus urged him to become a Christian,

and he expressed his willingness to do so after hearing the advice of his councillors, whom he accordingly convoked to discuss the question. In their opinion the worship of the pagan gods was utterly futile, and there seemed much to say for the adoption of a new religion which promised more solid comfort; so Edwin suffered himself to be baptized.

The description of this council by the historian contains some points of graphic interest, both as regards the event itself, and as reflecting the mode of life among our forefathers. The reader will therefore doubtless be glad of the following extract. After reporting the speech of one councillor, the narrative goes on as follows:—

“To whose persuasion another of the king’s chief men giving his assent, added with prudent words—‘To me, O king, the present life of man on earth appears in comparison with that time which is unknown to us, even as when you sit at supper in winter time with your commanders and ministers, a fire being kindled in the midst and the room being warmed, while wintry storms of rain or snow prevail out of doors, a sparrow happens to come and fly swiftly through the house. Scarcely has it entered at one door when it is out at the other. And during the time that it is within it is not touched by the winter storm; but after a brief interval of calm, escaping for a moment out of winter, it returns into winter again, and vanishes from your eyes. So this life of man appears for a short space, but what shall follow or what may have gone before we are utterly ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine has brought anything more certain, it seems well worth following.’

“The other elders and councillors of the king, divinely admonished, spoke to the same effect. But Coifi (mentioned

before as the chief priest of the pagan worship) added that he wished to hear more attentively Paulinus himself discoursing of the God whom he preached ; and when the latter had done so at the king's command, he exclaimed on hearing his words, 'I have long since been sensible that what we worshipped was nothing, because the more diligently I sought for truth in that worship the less I found it. But now I openly profess that in this preaching is manifest that truth which is able to confer upon us the gift of eternal life, salvation, and happiness. I therefore propose, O king, that we forthwith give over to cursing and to fire the temples and altars that we have consecrated without any fruit of usefulness.'

"In short the king openly gave his assent to the preaching of the blessed Paulinus, and renouncing idolatry confessed that he received the faith of Christ. And when he asked the said priest of his former worship who ought first to profane the altars and temples of the idols, with the enclosures by which they were surrounded, he answered, 'I ; for who can, more properly than myself, for an example to all men, destroy the things which I worshipped in foolishness through the wisdom given me by the true God?'"

The historian then tells us how Edwin was baptised at York on Easter Day, being the 12th April (which fixes the year as A.D. 627), "in the Church of St. Peter the Apostle, which he himself built of timber, hurrying on the work while he was being catechised and instructed in order to receive baptism." He appointed that city to be the see of Paulinus, the bishop who instructed him, and after his baptism built a larger and a finer church of stone there, enclosing within its walls the original wooden oratory. The king's example had a powerful effect upon the Northumbrians ; for Paulinus,

going once with the king and queen to a royal country seat near Wooler, was occupied for thirty-six whole days from morning to night in nothing else than catechising and baptising converts in the river Glen. The zeal of Edwin also persuaded the king of the East Saxons to receive the faith, and Paulinus carried his missionary efforts south of the Humber into the province of Lindsey. The memory of these things had not entirely faded at the time Bede wrote. A priest well known to him had conversed with one of the original converts whom Paulinus had baptised ; and by his report he was tall in stature, a little bent, with black hair, lean visage, and slender aquiline nose ; his aspect at once venerable and inspiring.

Very remarkable is the story how Christianity made its way when apparently it was all but extinguished ; how the pagan hordes of Mercia overthrew and killed the good king Edwin in battle, yet the son of the Mercian king became a Christian ; how the kingdom of Northumbria was nearly crushed, and how king Oswy, after vainly endeavouring to buy peace from his enemies, vowed that in the event of victory he would dedicate his daughter to the service of God, and give twelve farms for the endowment of monasteries. The battle was fought near Leeds, and king Oswy was victorious ; on which his daughter became a nun under the abbess Hilda, at Hartlepool, till two years later she removed with the abbess to the more magnificent foundation that Hilda had begun

at Whitby. Even so in another part of the island the East Saxons returned to the faith that they had once cast off; after which the South Saxons were for the first time converted. But for these things we must be content to refer the reader to the pages of Bede himself. Neither can we afford to dwell upon a number of very tempting and beautiful stories, such as those of St. Hilda just mentioned, who founded the abbey of Whitby,—of Cædmon the poet, who could not sing at feasts after the fashion of his countrymen till he was inspired with the love of sacred subjects and entered St. Hilda's monastery,—of St. Cuthbert, whose bright and winning countenance induced all men to unveil their hearts to him,—of Adamnan, abbot of Iona, who brought the Irish to conform to the Catholic rule of Easter, but could not prevail with his own monastery to do the same. This controversy about Easter occupies a very conspicuous place in the history. It was settled in a great council held at St. Hilda's monastery of Whitby.

At the end of his work Bede gives a complete chronological summary of the events related, from the invasion of Julius Cæsar in the year B.C. 60, to A.D. 731. He also adds a postscript, giving some particulars about himself and his literary labours, which convey a most astonishing impression of his literary activity. His object in writing it, however, seems to have been in the first place to authenticate what he had said by showing the reader his own devotion to letters, and enabling him to judge for

himself what opportunities the writer had for collecting information :—

“ Thus much of the ecclesiastical history of the Britons, and especially of the English nation, as far as I could learn, either by the writings of the ancients, or from the tradition of our ancestors, or by my own knowledge, I, Bede, a servant of God and priest of the monastery of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow, have composed. And being born in the territory of that monastery, when I was seven years old I was given to be educated to the most reverend Abbot Benedict, and afterwards to Ceolfrid ; and having spent my whole life since that time in the same monastery, I have devoted myself entirely to the study of Scripture, and at intervals between the observance of regular discipline and the daily care of singing in church I always took delight in learning, or teaching, or writing. In the nineteenth year of my life I received deacon's orders, in the thirtieth those of the priesthood, both by the ministry of the most reverend bishop John and by order of Abbot Ceolfrid. From which time of my becoming a priest till the fifty-ninth year of my age I have made it my business, for the use of me and mine, to make brief notes on Holy Scripture from the writings of venerable fathers, or even to add something to their interpretations in accordance with their views, viz. :

“ On the beginning of Genesis to the birth of Isaac, and the choosing of Israel and rejection of Ishmael, three books.

“ Of the tabernacle and its vessels, and the vestments of the priests, three books.

“ Also on the first part of Samuel, that is, to the death of Saul, four books.

“ Of the building of the temple, four books of allegorical exposition, like the rest.”

And so on. Altogether, he enumerates no less than thirty-nine different subjects or headings, on

each of which he had written at least one book, but more commonly two or three, and sometimes six or seven. Nor were the subjects entirely scriptural ; on the contrary, they embraced all the learning and all the knowledge of the times. He had written a book of letters in which one epistle was devoted to an explanation of leap year and the equinox according to Anatolius. He had written lives of saints, a special life of St. Cuthbert, a history of the abbots of his own monastery, a book of hymns, a book of epigrams, a book of orthography, and a book of poetry. A treatise that he wrote "On the Nature of Things" became a text-book of science to succeeding generations, in which, to use the words of Professor Morley, he "condensed the knowledge of his day, as modified by religion, on the subject of the World and its Creation, the elements, the firmament and heavens, the five circles of the world (northern, solstitial, equinoctial, brumal, and austral), the four quarters of the heavens, the stars, the course and order of the planets, their apses, their changes of colour, the zodiac and its signs, the milky way, the sun, the moon, their courses and eclipses, comets, air, winds, thunder and lightning, the rainbow, clouds, showers, hail, snow, signs of the weather, pestilence, fresh and salt water, tides, the sea, the Red Sea, the Nile, the position of the Earth, its form of a globe, its circle and dial shadows, its movement, volcanic Ætna, and the great geographical divisions of the Earth."

His love of study was unbounded. It appears

from his book on poetry and other evidences that he was familiar with Greek, and it is believed that he knew something even of Hebrew. But nowhere does his devotion to literature appear more strongly than in the well-known account of his death written by his pupil Cuthbert to a friend, which, though it has been so often quoted by other writers we cannot but transcribe and lay before the reader in this place :—

“To his fellow reader Cuthwin, beloved in Christ, Cuthbert his schoolfellow, health for ever in the Lord. I have received with much pleasure the small present which you sent me, and with much satisfaction read the letters of your devout erudition ; wherein I found what I very much desired, that masses and holy prayers are diligently celebrated by you for our father and master, Bede, whom God loved. I am, therefore, all the better pleased, for the love of him (according to my capacity), in a few words to relate in what manner he departed this world, as I understand that you also desire and ask the same. He was much troubled with shortness of breath, yet without pain, before the day of our Lord’s Resurrection, that is, for nearly a fortnight ; and thus he afterwards passed his life, cheerful and rejoicing, giving thanks to Almighty God every day and night, nay, every hour, till the day our Lord’s Ascension, that is, the seventh before the kalends of June [26th of May], and daily read lessons to us his disciples, and whatever remained of the day he spent in singing psalms. He also passed all the night awake, in joy and thanksgiving, except so far as a very slight slumber prevented it ; but he no sooner awoke than he presently repeated his wonted exercises, and ceased not to give thanks to God with uplifted hands.

“O truly happy man ! He chanted the sentence of St. Paul the Apostle, ‘It is dreadful to fall into the hands of the living God,’ and much more out of Holy Writ ; wherein also

he admonished us to think of our last hour, and to shake oft the sleep of the soul ; and being learned in our poetry, he said some things also in our tongue, for he said, putting the same into English,

“ For tham neod fere	Ær his heonen-gange
Nenig wyrtheth	Hwet his gaste
Thances snottra	Godes oththe yveles
Thonne him thearf sy	Æfter deathe heonen
To gehiggene	Demed wurthe.’

which means this :

“ No man is wiser than is requisite, before the necessary departure ; that is, to consider, before the soul departs hence, what good or evil it hath done, and how it is to be judged after its departure.’

“ He also sang antiphons according to our custom and his own, one of which is, ‘ O King of glory, Lord of all power, who, triumphing this day, didst ascend above all the heavens ; do not leave us orphans,’ but send down upon us the spirit of truth which was promised by the Father. Hallelujah ! † And when he came to that word, ‘ do not leave us orphans,’ he burst into tears and wept much, and an hour after he began to repeat what he had commenced, and we, hearing it, mourned with him. By turns we read, and by turns we wept, nay, we wept always while we read. In such joy we passed the period of fifty days (between Easter and Whit-Sunday), till the aforesaid day ; and he rejoiced much and gave God thanks because he had been thought worthy to be so weakened. He often repeated ‘ that God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,’ and much more out of Holy Scripture ; as also this sentence from St. Ambrose, ‘ I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live among you ; nor do I fear to die, because we have a gracious God.’ During these days he

* See St. John xiv. 18. The word translated “ comfortless ” in our version is in the Greek *δρφανούσι*.

† This is the antiphon for vespers on Ascension Day in the Sarum breviary, and is now used with some modification in our Church as the collect for the Sunday after.

laboured to compose two works well worthy to be remembered, besides the lessons we had from him, and singing of Psalms ; viz., he translated the Gospel of St. John into our own tongue for the benefit of the church ; and some collections out of the book of Notes of Bishop Isidorus, saying, 'I will not have my pupils read a falsehood, nor labour therein without profit after my death.' When the Tuesday before the Ascension of our Lord came, he began to suffer still more in his breath, and a small swelling appeared in his feet ; but he passed all that day and dictated cheerfully, and now and then, among other things, said, 'Go on quickly, I know not how long I shall hold out, and whether my Maker will not soon take me away.' But to us he seemed very well to know the time of his departure ; and so he spent the night awake, in thanksgiving.

And when the morning appeared, that is Wednesday, he ordered us to write with all speed what he had begun ; and this done, we walked in procession with the relics of the saints till the third hour as the custom of that day was. There was one of us, however, with him, who said to him, 'Most dear master, there is still one chapter wanting ; do you think it troublesome to be asked any more questions ?' He answered, 'It is no trouble. Take your pen, and dip it and write fast.' Which he did. But at the ninth hour he said to me, 'I have some little articles of value in my chest, such as pepper, napkins, and incense ; run quickly, and bring the priests of our monastery to me, that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has bestowed on me. The rich in this world are bent on giving gold and silver, and other precious things. But I, with much charity and joy, will give my brothers that which God has given to me.' He spoke to every one of them, admonishing and entreating them that they would carefully say masses and prayers for him, which they readily promised ; but they all mourned and wept, especially because he said that they should no more see his face in this world. They rejoiced, however, because he said, 'The time is come that I shall

return to Him who formed me out of nothing : I have lived long ; my merciful Judge well foresaw my life for me ; the time of my dissolution draws nigh ; for I desire to die and to be with Christ.' Having said much more, he passed the day joyfully till the evening ; and the boy above mentioned, said : ' Dear master, there is yet one sentence not written.' He answered, ' Write quickly.' Soon after, the boy said, ' The sentence is now written.' He replied, ' It is well, you have said the truth. It is ended. Receive my head into your hands, for it is a great satisfaction to me to sit opposite my holy place in which I was wont to pray, that I may also sitting call upon my Father.' And thus on the pavement of his little cell, singing ' Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' when he had named the Holy Ghost, he breathed his last, and so departed to the heavenly kingdom. All who were present at the death of the blessed father said they had never seen any other person expire with so much devotion, and in so tranquil a frame of mind. For as you have heard, so long as the soul animated his body, he never ceased to give thanks to the true and living God, with expanded hands, exclaiming, ' Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost !' with other spiritual ejaculations. But know this, dearest brother, that I could say much concerning him, if my want of learning did not cut short my discourse. Nevertheless, by the grace of God I purpose shortly to write more concerning him, particularly of those things which I saw with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears."

It appears from this letter that Bede died on Ascension Day, which in that particular year fell on the 26th May. The date must therefore have been in the year of our Lord 735 ; and as the *Ecclesiastical History* terminates in the year 731, it is clear that the author did not long survive the completion of his greatest work.

From the first the *Ecclesiastical History* of Bede has always been regarded as a work of the highest interest. After the lapse of several centuries it was still looked upon as the model of what a history ought to be, and after which other histories ought to be written. It was translated by the great king Alfred into the vernacular English of his own day, and it has been frequently translated since. No one, indeed, can be indifferent to such a remarkable record of the dawn of Christian civilization in this country, written so near the time itself by one of the most vigorous and many-sided intellects that England ever produced. Much of the information contained in it seems to have been derived from the memory of persons living in Bede's own day. A good deal more was supplied to him by correspondents at London and at Canterbury. Some part also is believed to have been founded on native annals not now extant. It is evident that the author sought eagerly for information wherever it was to be found.

Nor can it be considered a reflection upon his judgment, considering the slender means at his disposal for the verification of many things, that he has filled a considerable portion of the work with miraculous stories which the modern reader will at once dismiss as fabulous. It was the universal belief in those days that the power of working miracles, communicated by our Lord to His apostles in the first instance, had never ceased to be exercised by holy men in the Church, and the

conviction that such things were possible, predisposed the mind to believe in them as facts. The acknowledged rarity of the occurrences at the same time prevented minute inquiry; for the power of working miracles was esteemed an attribute of peculiar saintliness, and if the immediate witnesses were mistaken in what they saw, or about the instrumentality through which it was effected, there was no means by which the ablest writer living at a distance, even if contemporary with the facts, could easily correct their mistakes. But in Bede's history it will be noted that marvels of this sort abound most in reference to a period long before his own day, and where it is otherwise there is generally not much difficulty in explaining the phenomenon in accordance with natural laws.

We must not, therefore, be surprised that even a writer of such strong intelligence should tell us that Germanus stilled a tempest in the channel while going over to Britain to quell the Pelagian heresy; that he gave eyesight to a blind girl, and performed a number of other miracles not recorded; that a fire at Canterbury, against which all human efforts were unavailing, was quenched by the prayers of the infirm and gouty Mellitus, who having ordered himself to be carried to the place where it was most vehement, caused the wind immediately to change. Of stories like these there is great abundance in Bede's history; but all that they can be justly considered to prove is that his intense and vehement love of knowledge went far beyond the

means at his disposal for testing the accuracy of his information.

We pass over an interval of nearly two hundred years before we come to another historian of real graphic power. Nor have we even then a great historian, much less a man of anything like Bede's comprehensiveness and universality of mind. He is, in fact, not an historian at all, but only a biographer ; his work is little more than a fragment, of which a very small portion is original, and the interest of it is mainly due to the genuine greatness of the man whom he describes to us. Nevertheless, Asser's *Life of Alfred* is by no means contemptible, even as a literary composition ; and if it is seldom studied in the original, some part of its contents is known to all and related in other language to children in the nursery at this day.

Although the place of his birth is nowhere stated, there is little doubt that Asser was a Welshman. Of his education we know from himself that he was brought up in the monastery of St. David's, where he also received the tonsure and was ordained a priest. It is the opinion of Sir Thomas Hardy that he ultimately became head of that house, if not bishop of the see ; for he speaks of injustice done both to the see and to the monastery by King Hemeyd of South Wales, and complains particularly of the expulsion of the prelates, including himself and his kinsman Archbishop Novis. It was this circumstance that made him to some extent less regardful of local ties, and

caused him to yield the more easily to the persuasions of Alfred to spend some time in his kingdom ; for he felt that by cultivating the friendship of such a powerful prince, his own position, even in Wales, would be materially strengthened. He is, in fact, mentioned by later writers as successor to Novis in the bishopric of St. David's ; and he himself states that he had possessions and jurisdiction both westward and northward of the river Severn. King Alfred, however, set a high value on his friendship, and gave him the bishopric of Exeter, and probably also that of Shirburn, the see of which was in after times transferred to Salisbury, besides some other promotions. Asser himself does not mention both these bishoprics, but only that of Exeter, and the monasteries of Amesbury and Banwell, as having been given him by King Alfred ; but as Asser's *Life of Alfred* is only a fragment composed many years before the king's death, and never completed by its author, it is quite possible that he may have received Shirburn from the same patron as his other English preferments.

Asser, however, wrote as a Welshman, and for the use of Welshmen. The fact is apparent from his speaking of the English as "Saxons," and calling their country "Saxony," besides translating English local names by Celtic ones ; as, for example, Selwood, which he not only renders into Latin as *Silva Magna*, but into British or Welsh as *Coit-mawr*. It is remarkable, and to my mind not very consistent with those theories held by some of the

extermination of the original British inhabitants by the Saxons, that a considerable number of places throughout England, though they had by this time received Saxon names from the most recent conquerors of the island, were still known to the ancient British races by the names in use before the conquest. Just as at this day, in parts of Ireland and Scotland which a few generations ago were far removed from intercourse with the English-speaking race, a village, or a mountain, is known to the world in general by an English name, but to the original inhabitants by a Celtic one; so it was in the days of Asser in districts absolutely under the dominion of the Saxon. Eaxanceastre, or Exeter, we are told, was called in British Cairwisc, Cirencester was called Cairceri, Snotingaham (or Nottingham) was called Tiggucobauc, or the House of Caves, Thornsæta (or Dorset) was called Durngueis. Even on the east coast of England the very island on which the Saxon invaders first set foot, although it had received from them the name which it still retains of Thanet, was known to some in the days of King Alfred by its old British name of Ruim.

For the earlier part of his work Asser appears to have availed himself of the annals known as the *Saxon Chronicle*, which he simply translated into Latin with here and there a word of comment or explanation. He begins, however, from the year 849, the date of Alfred's birth, which he uses throughout as an era; and wherever, in translating from the Chronicle, he has to mention the year

of our Lord, he is always careful to add "which was the third after the birth of King Alfred," or, which was the twelfth, thirty-ninth, or whatever it might be, of King Alfred's life. From the year 849 to 887 the work is in this way mainly derived from the Chronicle, and relates even more to the general history of the kingdom than to the life of Alfred himself. But it is of course to the original portion, containing those personal notices of the king from which almost all our knowledge of him is derived, that the work owes nearly all its value.

Here, however, as in the case of Gildas, the critics will not let us rest. How much of Asser is original? Or how much of the received work is really authentic? There is no doubt, unfortunately, that it has been much interpolated; and the one bold sceptic who impugns the authenticity of Gildas ventures to insinuate here too that the whole treatise is the production of a later age. This theory, however, has not found general acceptance, and we only mention it to show the reader how our path is beset with difficulties. The question as to the extent of the interpolations is more serious, for, unfortunately, no ancient manuscripts of Asser now remain. One ancient copy which appears to have been used by Archbishop Parker, Asser's first editor, perished in the disastrous fire which consumed a portion of the Cottonian library in 1731; and it is perfectly certain that even Archbishop Parker did not print the text exactly as it stood in this manuscript. But the great antiquary, Camden,

who printed a second edition of this treatise, took still further liberties, and actually inserted, as if it were part of Asser's work, a passage derived from a totally different source, in which King Alfred is absurdly represented as settling disputes at the University of Oxford. Great scholars even in the days of James I. could believe that the antiquity of that venerable seat of learning actually reached back to the days of King Alfred.

It is difficult to excuse such editing as this ; for, whatever may be said to palliate the credulity which in that age was disposed to accept the fact related, there could be no justification of the course Camden pursued in introducing foreign matter into Asser's narrative. Archbishop Parker, it is true, had done the same ; but the passages which he introduced were from a work which he believed to be by the same author, so that it may be said they were inserted in good faith, though by no means with good judgment. The Archbishop, in fact, confounded together two totally different works, which were both in that day attributed to Asser, and supplied from a later treatise commonly called *Asser's Annals*, a good deal of matter that he found omitted in the *Life of Alfred*. Now, the so-called *Asser's Annals* borrow a good deal of their contents, either from the *Life of Alfred*, or from the corresponding parts of the *Saxon Chronicle* ; and where they contain more it might very well have appeared that the manuscript of the *Life of Alfred* was defective. But instead of being

the real work of Asser it can be shown conclusively that the *Annals* were written at least fourscore years after Asser's death, and in all probability they are a good deal later.

Now, the natural result of all this tampering with Asser's text and the loss of the one ancient manuscript which existed in the beginning of the last century, is that we should be in considerable doubt as to what Asser really said, and whether any part of the text could really be relied on. And so, in fact, we should have been, but that in 1722, just before the fire in the Cottonian Library, an edition of Asser was published by an editor named Wise, in which the work was collated throughout with all the manuscripts then known to exist. From this collation we can now declare with certainty how much of the received text was contained in the one only manuscript which ought to have been regarded as of much authority ; and even this manuscript, it would seem, did not contain the text of Asser absolutely pure and unadulterated. But the revelations made by this examination are not a little instructive. We shall give one example which should certainly interest other people than bookworms.

The old familiar story of Alfred allowing the cakes to burn in a cowherd's cottage has been generally related by historians on the authority of Asser's *Life of Alfred*. On examination it turns out that this is one of the interpolations of a later date. This is not, we may remark, as much as to say that the incident is entirely apocryphal ; for

a story preserved for some time by tradition may be perfectly true, and in this case we pronounce no opinion one way or other. But the fact is that it formed no part whatever of Asser's work, but was tagged on by the author of the so-called *Annals of Asser* to a passage in the *Life* derived from the *Saxon Chronicle*. To exhibit the whole process of manufacture, we will first give the words of the *Saxon Chronicle* :—

“ Anno 878. This year, during mid-winter, the army [of the Danes] stole away to Chippenham, and overran the land of the West Saxons, and sat down there ; and many of the people they drove beyond sea, and of the remainder the greater part they subdued and forced to obey them, except King Alfred ; and he, with a small band, with difficulty retreated to the woods and to the fortresses of the moors.”

This passage Asser translated, it may be a little paraphrastically ; but even in the translation as it now stands, we find an additional clause referring to a life of St. Neot which could not have been part of the original text, but was probably embodied in it many years after Asser's death. So that the latter part of the above passage reads as follows in the *Life* :—

“ At the same time, the above-named King Alfred, with a few of his nobles and certain soldiers and vassals, used to lead an unquiet life in great tribulation among the woodlands and marshy districts of Somerset ; for he had nothing to live upon except what he could take by frequent forays, either secretly or openly, from the Pagans, or even from the Christians who had submitted to the Pagan rule ; and as we read in the *Life of St. Neot* he [once took refuge] with one of his cowherds.”

Here we have the first allusion to the cowherd, but still there is nothing said about the burning of the cakes ; nor did the one ancient manuscript contain the story when it was unfortunately burned in the Cottonian fire. But even in the earliest edition of the work, which was printed by Parker in 1574, the story occurs as an addition to the preceding paragraph, and is related as follows. We adopt the translation of Dr. Giles, who has turned a Latin distich in the original in a very spirited manner into verse in the Somersetshire dialect :—

“ But it happened on a certain day that the countrywoman, wife of the cowherd, was preparing some loaves to bake, and the king, sitting at the hearth, made ready his bow and arrows and other warlike instruments. The unlucky woman espying the cakes burning at the fire, ran up to remove them, and rebuking the brave king, exclaimed—

‘ Ca’sn thee mind the ke-aks, man, and doossen zee ‘em burn ?
I’m boun’ thee’s eat ‘em vast enough, az zoon az ‘tiz the turn.’

The blundering woman little thought that it was King Alfred, who had fought so many battles against the Pagans, and gained so many victories over them.”

That this was a distinct addition to the original text is shown by the fact that it was not contained in the old Cottonian manuscript, but only in the so-called *Asser's Annals*. And the reader will observe that it also bears internal evidence of being an interpolation in the fact that it is positively inconsistent with what goes before. For the *Life* itself, following the authority of a *Life of St. Neot*,

says the king took shelter with one of his own cowherds (*apud quendam suum vaccarium*), evidently a trusty dependent who knew him personally; while the anecdote taken out of the *Annals* states that the cowherd's wife did not know who her guest was. It is impossible, surely, that a writer who intended to tell such a story would previously have used the expression "apud quendam suum vaccarium."

Indeed, the inconsistency is even more marked if we look at the pseudo *Annals of Asser* themselves; for it will be seen that in the second last extract, which is taken from the *Life of Alfred*, we have been obliged to bracket in three words—"once took refuge"—to complete the sense and make good grammar. This may have been a mere accidental omission in the manuscript; for even in the Latin it cannot be said that the absence of a verb in the sentence is consistent with good composition. But if we go to the pseudo Asser, from which the writer was transcribing, we find the verb supplied, and along with it an adverb, which together make the sense very much stronger than that of the three words we have bracketed. For the statement there is, not that Alfred merely "once took refuge," but that he "lay hid for a long time" (*diu latebat*) at the house of this cowherd; so that the idea that the cowherd's wife—his own dependent—did not know who he was, becomes far more improbable. At all events, if the writer of the *Annals* had entertained this idea, he would probably have expressed it that his narrative might not seem to suggest the contrary.

It is true, these internal indications of different authorship could hardly have been regarded if we had not other evidence ; indeed, as it is, I am not aware that they have been pointed out before now ; but they are worth observing.

There is, however, a further means of testing the accuracy of Asser's text which we have not yet mentioned. Although there is now no ancient manuscript of the *Life of Alfred* to which we can appeal, a great part of it was transcribed word for word by Florence of Worcester in the twelfth century, and incorporated with other materials in his chronicle. And Florence of Worcester in this place not only omits altogether the story of the cakes, but says nothing even of the king taking refuge with a cowherd, and makes no allusion whatever to the *Life of St. Neot*, from which that statement is derived. Now, as we have shown already that the allusion to the *Life of St. Neot* could not have been a part of the original work, it is clear that in this particular passage the text of Asser exists in a less corrupt state in Florence of Worcester than it does, or even than it did in the beginning of the last century, in any manuscript of the *Life of Alfred* itself.

Taking this incident, therefore, as something undoubtedly incorporated with the biography of Alfred at a later period, it shows at least how tradition loved to dwell upon his memory and to preserve anecdotes of him which, even if they were to some extent apocryphal, were still, we may

believe, highly characteristic of the man and of the days in which he lived. Other anecdotes, scarcely less graphic and interesting, would appear to be part of Asser's genuine work ; and yet in some cases they are rather difficult to harmonise, even with the facts preserved by Asser himself. The following, for instance, so far as external testimony goes, would seem to be a genuine part of the story written by the bishop who was Alfred's contemporary. After relating that although he showed himself precocious from his cradle, yet "by the unworthy neglect of his parents and nurses," the boy remained illiterate till he was twelve years old or more ; it is added :—

"On a certain day, therefore, his mother was showing him and his brother a Saxon book of poetry, which she held in her hands, and said, 'Whichever of you shall the soonest learn this volume, shall have it for his own.' Stimulated by these words, or rather by the Divine inspiration, and allured by the beautifully illuminated letter at the beginning of the volume, he spoke before all his brothers, who, though his seniors in age, were not so in grace, and answered : 'Will you really give that book to one of us, that is to say, to him who can first understand and repeat it to you ?' At this his mother smiled with satisfaction, and confirmed what she had before said. Upon which the boy took the book out of her hand, and went to his master to read it, and in due time brought it to his mother and recited."

This is an anecdote which, it must be universally felt, one would not like to lose. But just in proportion to that feeling must be the wish to understand and appreciate it. From what goes before

we should naturally presume that this occurrence took place when he was about twelve years old ; more especially as there is at the beginning a "therefore," (*ergo*) which seems to connect it with preceding statements. But Alfred's mother, Asburgha, must have died soon after the year 853, in which, as the biography itself tells us, the child was sent by his father to Rome ; and at that date he could have been little more than four years old. Some are therefore led to the belief that the "mother" referred to was his stepmother, Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, king of the Franks ; but apart from the improbability of the word *mater* being used instead of *noverca*, it is suggested as very unlikely that this foreign princess, who was married before she was thirteen, would have been at much pains to teach Saxon poetry to grown-up stepsons, some of whom were probably older than herself. The most reasonable view seems to be that Alfred's real mother was intended. The passage in the midst of which the anecdote occurs is a digression in which the author takes leave for a time of the political history derived from the *Saxon Chronicle*, in order to tell, as he himself says, all that had come to his knowledge touching the great king's infancy and boyhood. It must also be understood that, although the Latin of the above extract might be so construed, this story does not refer to Alfred's learning to read ; for that is recorded later, and the date at which he acquired the art is stated to have been the thirty-

ninth year of his age. The anecdote is only related as an early manifestation of that intelligence and love of letters of which he gave still more striking evidence in his manhood as king of the West Saxons and of England.

Farther on in the narrative it is related how in those days he invited from Mercia four eminent divines and scholars: Weresfrith, bishop of Worcester, who at his command translated the Dialogues of Pope Gregory and his disciple Peter into English; Plegmund, whom he made archbishop of Canterbury; Ethelstan and Werewulf whom he made his priests and chaplains. Not content with this, he sent messengers beyond sea to Gaul and invited over Grimbald, "priest and monk, a venerable man and good singer, adorned with every kind of ecclesiastical discipline and good morals, and most learned in Holy Scripture;" also John, another priest and monk, who is described as a man of great energy and learning, and skilled in various arts. Such men he enriched and promoted to great honour. So also he induced the author, bishop Asser himself, to make his abode in his kingdom instead of Wales.

"In these times I also, at the king's invitation, came into Saxony out of the furthest coasts of Western Britain; and when I had proposed to go to him through many intervening provinces, I arrived in the country of the Saxons, who live on the right hand, which in Saxon is called Sussex, under the guidance of some of that nation; and there I first saw him

in the royal vill, which is called Dene.* He received me with kindness, and among other familiar conversation, he asked me eagerly to devote myself to his service, and become his friend ; to leave everything which I possessed on the left, or western, bank of the Severn, and he promised he would give more than an equivalent for it in his own dominions. I replied that I could not incautiously and rashly promise such things ; for it seemed to me unjust that I should leave those sacred places in which I had been bred, educated, and crowned,† and at last ordained, for the sake of any earthly honour and power, unless by compulsion. Upon this he said, ' If you cannot accede to this, at least let me have your service in part. Spend six months of the year with me here, and the other six in Britain.' To this I replied, ' I could not even promise that, easily or hastily, without the advice of my friends.' At length, however, when I perceived that he was anxious for my services, though I knew not why, I promised him that, if my life was spared, I would return to him after six months, with such a reply as should be agreeable to him, as well as advantageous to me and mine. With this answer he was satisfied, and when I had given him a pledge to return at the appointed time, on the fourth day we left him and returned on horseback towards our own country.

" After our departure a violent fever seized me in the city of Winchester, where I lay for twelve months and one week, night and day without hope of recovery. At the appointed time, therefore, I could not fulfil my promise of visiting him, and he sent messages to hasten my journey, and to inquire the cause of my delay. As I was unable to ride to him, I sent a second message to tell him the cause of my delay, and assure him that, if I recovered from my infirmity, I

* East and West Dean are two villages near Chichester. There are also two villages so named near Eastbourne, one of which, it has been thought, may be the place in question.

† This expression alludes to the tonsure which was undergone by those who became clerks. The crown of the head was shaved, leaving a circle of hair round it.

would fulfil what I had promised. My complaint left me and by the advice and consent of all my friends, for the benefit of that holy place, and of all who dwelt therein, I did as I had promised to the king, and devoted myself to his service, on the condition that I should remain with him six months in every year, either continuously, if I could spend six months with him at once, or alternately, three months in Britain, and three in Saxony."

Afterwards the author tells us how he was induced by the king's earnest solicitation to stay with him eight months at the royal villa of Leonaford—

"During which I read to him whatever books he liked, and such as he had at hand; for this is his most usual custom, both night and day, amid his many other occupations of mind and body, either himself to read books, or to listen whilst others read them."

The process by which he learned to read himself may be described a little more briefly than in the very words of his biographer. One day, as the king and Asser were sitting together talking on various subjects, the latter read to him a quotation out of a certain book, with which Alfred was so greatly pleased, that he desired him to write it down in a book which he took out of his bosom, containing the daily services, psalms, and prayers, that he had been accustomed to recite in his youth. The bishop gave thanks inwardly to God, who had implanted such a love of wisdom in the king's heart, but could find no vacant space in the book to write the quotation in. He therefore asked if the king would like him to write the quotation on some leaf apart, as it was possible that other say-

ings might occur to him hereafter which he would like preserved in the same way. To this the king willingly assented. Asser accordingly wrote the quotation on a clean sheet, and, as he anticipated, was desired to follow it up by three other quotations that very day, so that the sheet soon became quite full. "Thus," says his biographer, "like a most industrious bee, he flew here and there, asking questions as he went, until he had eagerly and unceasingly collected many various flowers of Divine Scriptures, with which he thickly stored the cells of his mind." From the time that the first quotation was copied he was at once eager to read, to translate it into Saxon, and to teach it to others. He began to study selections from the sacred writings, and to put a number of them together in a book which he called his *Enchiridion*, or Manual, because he constantly kept it in hand, day and night.

Thus it was that the great king became a scholar. It may be doubted whether more than two or three of the kings of England after him, if even so many, were able to read or write during the next five hundred years or more. But Alfred not only set himself to learn those accomplishments, but he became an author, and translated a number of valuable works from the Latin into his native Anglo-Saxon, among others, as we have already mentioned, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Bede.

His devoutness in dividing his revenues equally between the service of God and secular uses, and the methodical manner in which each half was

divided again, and apportioned to more specific objects, are related by Asser with admiration. But still more interesting is the mode in which he divided his time. The story, indeed, is very well known, but may as well be related here from the original authority :—

“ He promised, as far as his infirmity and his means would allow, to give up to God the half of his services, bodily and mental, by night and by day, voluntarily and with all his might ; but inasmuch as he could not equally distinguish the lengths of the hours by night, on account of the darkness, and oftentimes of the day, on account of the storms and clouds, he began to consider by what means, and without any difficulty, relying on the mercy of God, he might discharge the promised tenor of his vow until his death. After long reflection on these things, he at length, by a useful and shrewd invention, commanded his chaplains to supply wax in a sufficient quantity, and he caused it to be weighed in such a manner that when there was so much of it in the scales as would equal the weight of seventy-two pence, he caused the chaplains to make six candles thereof, each of equal length, so that each candle might have twelve divisions marked longitudinally upon it. By this plan, therefore, those six candles burned for twenty-four hours—a night and a day—without fail, before the sacred relics of many of God’s elect, which always accompanied him wherever he went ; but sometimes, when they would not continue burning a whole day and night till the same hour that they were lighted the preceding evening, from the violence of the wind, which blew day and night without intermission through the doors and windows of the churches, the fissures of the divisions, the plankings, or the wall, or the thin canvas of the tents, they then unavoidably burned out, and finished their course before the appointed time. The king, therefore, considered by what means he might shut out the wind ; and so, by a useful and

cunning invention, he ordered a lantern to be beautifully constructed of wood and white oxhorn, which, when skilfully planed till it is thin, is no less transparent than a vessel of glass. This lantern, therefore, was wonderfully made of wood and horn, as we before said, and by night a candle was put into it, which shone as brightly without as within, and was not extinguished by the wind ; for the opening of the lantern was also closed up, according to the king's command, by a door made of horn. By this contrivance, then, six candles, lighted in succession, lasted four and twenty hours, neither more nor less, and when these were extinguished, others were lighted."

Here we must close our notice of Asser, and of historians prior to the Norman Conquest. It will be observed that we have laid before the reader three remarkable writers, each characteristic of his time—writers of very unequal greatness, it is true, but all alike necessary to be studied in connection with their respective eras. Even in their very nationality and surroundings they mark the state of civilization each had before him, and who were the favoured people of the day. The first is a Briton, the second a northern Englishman, the third a Briton again, but living at the court of a southern Englishman, the first king of a united England. In the first, we have a native writer mourning over the destruction of his country, the decay of Christianity, and the advance made by a barbarous pagan enemy, who lay between his countrymen and the civilization of Europe. In the second, we find a descendant of the invaders, who by this time have become Christian, telling the

glad story of the conversion of his ancestors, and the spread of true religion among his people. In the time of the third writer, Britons and Englishmen have become friends, and unite in Christian sympathy against a new pagan invader—the Dane. Such was the conflict of races in our island, and such the struggle Christianity and civilization had to pass through before the Norman Conquest.





CHAPTER II.

RECORDS OF THE MONKS.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*—Influence of the Norman Conquest—
Chronicle of Battle Abbey—How monasteries fostered literature
and civilization—Florence of Worcester—Eadmer—His account
of St. Anselm—William of Malmesbury—Extracts touching the
effect of the Conquest—The First Crusade—Robert of Normandy
and Henry I.—The *Gesta Stephani*—Early report of a debate in
the king's council—Extract touching Bristol and Bath—The
Empress Maud—Henry of Huntingdon—Ordericus Vitalis.

IT must be owned that the art of writing history languished after the days of Bede. For about four centuries England scarcely produced any one deserving the name of a historian. Yet during that very period one remarkable record was preserved in the vernacular language, of all the important events from year to year; and though for the most part only a mere register of facts, it is impossible to pass over in silence such a great literary monument as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Originated, as some believe, by King Alfred, and certainly existing in his day, as indeed we have

had occasion to see already,* it was continued from age to age by various hands till after the death of Stephen. The mere language of the different manuscripts affords an interesting study to the philologist, the variations of the dialect in different parts bearing witness to different degrees of antiquity in the composition, and the existence of concurrent texts in several places show that it was transcribed and added to by different and independent writers. The existing manuscripts also come to an end at very different dates, and special circumstances contained in particular texts seem occasionally to indicate the monastery in which a particular edition was composed.

Beginning with a description of the island of Britain, and the races by whom it was originally inhabited, which is simply an abridgment of Bede's introductory chapter, followed by a brief notice of the conquest by Julius Cæsar, the text consists for some time of a mere chronology of Roman and Church history. The narrative becomes more minute in the ninth century, when it records the incursions of the Danes, especially during the time of Alfred; and the close agreement of all but one of the existing manuscripts for the period of his life has been noted as a strong presumption in favour of the belief that it was by Alfred's order the chronicle was originally compiled. After the date of his death the variations in the text of the different manuscripts become more frequent, and

* See p. 32.

more material. The style, too, varies here and there from the old type. The victories of Athelstan over the Scots are recorded in verse ; and also the deeds of King Edmund, King Edgar, the martyrdom of King Edward, the death of Edward the Confessor, and some other matters. But, on the whole, it must be confessed that the contents of this chronicle are very matter of fact ; and while the study of it is indispensable to the historian, it can scarcely be recommended as generally attractive reading. Nevertheless there are passages in the latter part which possess not a little graphic interest ; as, for example, the following description of William the Conqueror, written, as the extract shows, by one who knew him personally :—

“ If any would know what manner of man King William was, the glory that he obtained, and of how many lands he was lord, then will we describe him as we have known him, we, who have looked upon him, and who once lived in his court. This King William, of whom we are speaking, was a very wise and a great man, and more honoured and more powerful than any of his predecessors. He was mild to those good men who loved God, but severe beyond measure towards those who withheld his will. He founded a noble monastery on the spot where God permitted him to conquer England, and he established monks in it, and he made it very rich. In his days the great monastery at Canterbury was built, and many others also throughout England ; moreover, this land was filled with monks, who lived after the rule of St. Benedict ; and such was the state of religion in his days, that all that would, might observe that which was prescribed by their respective orders. King William was also held in much reverence : he wore his crown three times a year, when he

was in England : at Easter he wore it at Winchester, at Pentecost at Westminster, and at Christmas at Gloucester. And at these times, all the men of England were with him, archbishops, bishops, abbots and earls, thanes and knights. So also was he a very stern and a wrathful man, so that none durst do anything against his will, and he kept in prison those earls who acted against his pleasure. He removed bishops from their sees, and abbots from their offices, and he imprisoned thanes, and at length he spared not his own brother Odo. This Odo was a very powerful bishop in Normandy, his see was that of Bayeux, and he was foremost to serve the king. He had an earldom in England, and when William was in Normandy, he was the first man in this country, and him did he cast into prison. Amongst other things the good order that William established is not to be forgotten ; it was such that any man who was himself aught, might travel over the kingdom with a bosom-full of gold unmolested ; and no man durst kill another, however great the injury he might have received from him. He reigned over England, and being sharp-sighted to his own interest, he surveyed the kingdom so thoroughly that there was not a single hide of land throughout the whole of which he knew not the possessor, and how much it was worth, and this he afterwards entered in his register.* The land of the Britons (*i.e.* Wales) was under his sway, and he built castles therein ; moreover he had full dominion over the Isle of Man (Anglesea). Scotland also was subject to him, from his great strength ; the land of Normandy was his by inheritance, and he possessed the earldom of Maine ; and had he lived two years longer he would have subdued Ireland by his powers, and that without a battle. Truly, there was much trouble in these times, and very great distress ; he caused castles to be built, and oppressed the poor. The king was also of great sternness, and he took from his subjects many marks of gold, and many hundred pounds of silver, and this either with or without right, and with little need. He was given to avarice,

* This of course is the celebrated Domesday Book.

and greedily loved gain. He made large forests for the deer, and enacted laws therewith, so that whoever killed a hart or a hind should be blinded. As he forbade killing the deer so also the boars ; and he loved the tall stags as if he were their father. He also appointed concerning the hares that they should go free. The rich complained, and the poor murmured, but he was so sturdy that he recked nought of them ; they must will all that the king willed, if they would live, or would keep their lands, or would hold their possessions, or would be maintained in their rights. Alas ! that any man should so exalt himself, and carry himself in his pride over all ! May Almighty God show mercy to his soul, and grant him the forgivness of his sins. We have written concerning him these things, good and bad, that virtuous men might follow after the good and wholly avoid the evil, and might go in the way that leadeth to the kingdom of heaven."

From one passage in this extract it will be noted that the Norman Conquest gave a considerable impulse to the spread of monasticism in England. It was politic in a king who desired to enforce order and obedience to his own rule, to encourage the establishment of communities which afforded a conspicuous example of discipline submitted to by the general consent of the members. But William did something more than encourage them. He himself founded the magnificent abbey of Battle on the scene of his great victory at Hastings ; and a chronicle composed within the monastery itself shows the remarkable interest he took both in the original foundation and in its subsequent progress. A few extracts from the substance of this chronicle will exemplify his feeling on the subject.

William, it seems, had prosecuted his enterprise

in spite of evil omens. On jumping ashore at Hastings he fell upon his face, grasping the earth with outstretched hands and making his nose bleed. His followers whispered to each other their apprehensions. But the witty William Fitz Osbert, his faithful sewer, met their objections with a clever argument. "By my troth," he said, "it is a token of prosperity, not of misfortune; for, lo! he hath embraced England with both his hands and sealed it to posterity with his own blood; and thus by the foreboding of divine Providence is he destined effectually to win it!" His followers were equally dismayed before the battle of Hastings itself when, as they were helping each other on with their armour, some one handed to Duke William a coat of mail, with the wrong side foremost. The Duke, however, quietly put it on; said if he had any confidence in omens or sorcery he would not that day go to battle, but trusting himself only to his Creator, and to encourage his followers, he made a vow that if victorious he would erect a monastery on the field of battle for the salvation of those who fought by his side, and especially of those who fell. Among those who heard the vow was one William, surnamed Faber, or the Smith, a monk of Marmoutier in Normandy, —so called because he had distinguished himself in days before he was a monk, by manufacturing an arrow at an emergency when he was one of a hunting party; and after the victory, as time passed away, and the king was continually occupied with other matters, William the Smith still kept the

subject before him until steps were taken to execute the design. At length William the Smith himself was entrusted with its execution. He went over to Marmoutier and brought back with him four monks of that abbey to view the ground and make a commencement. The four monks thought the battle-field itself unsuitable. The ground was too high. A little lower on the western slope of the hill would be a more convenient site; and there accordingly they built some little dwellings. But the king, inquiring about what they had done, was dissatisfied. The monks told him the site he had prescribed was on the top of a hill on a dry soil, and destitute of water. William was angry and insisted that they should build upon the very place where he had gained the victory. "As for water," he said, "if God spare my life I will so amply provide for this place that wine shall be more abundant here than water in any other great abbey!" The monks then alleged that no good stone could be found near about; but William, at his own expense, sent ships to Caen to bring it. After a good deal of stone had been imported, however, it was revealed—so went the story—"to a certain religious matron that, upon digging in the place indicated to her in a vision, they would find plenty of stone for this purpose;" and on search being made accordingly an abundant supply was discovered.

The work still went on slowly "on account of some extortioners who sought their own things rather than those of Jesus Christ, and laboured

more in appearance than in truth. The brethren too, were lukewarm, and built within the intended circuit of the monastery mean dwellings of little cost, for their own residence. And thus by an evil example at first, things were put off from day to day, and the royal treasures allotted for the furtherance of the undertaking were improperly spent, and many things conferred upon the place by the king's devout liberality carelessly squandered." An abbot was appointed who was accidentally drowned ; but a successor was chosen in his place, under whom both the buildings and the number of the brethren increased. This abbot, by name Gausbert, was consecrated in the year 1076, just ten years after the battle, by Stigand, bishop of Chichester. The bishop at first insisted that the new abbot should come to Chichester and have the rite performed there ; but the abbot went to the king, who, zealous for the honour of the monastery he himself had founded, insisted that the bishop should go to Battle, and consecrate him in the abbey church itself. Even so, when abbot Gausbert some time afterwards paid a visit for devotion's sake to the parent monastery of Marmoutier where he himself had been a monk, the abbot and convent of that monastery seized the opportunity to establish their superiority over Battle.

"They endeavoured to cause the abbot to receive ordination in their chapter-house, and thenceforward to compel him to go thither as often as they should summon him. But Gausbert perceived their design, and when, after his return to England, he was repeatedly summoned to Marmoutier,

refused to comply, but repaired to court and complained to the king. Whereupon the king was angry, and ordered all the monks of Marmoutier who were with him to be sent away. He even threatened the abbot himself: 'By the splendour of God!' said he—for that was his accustomed oath—'if you cross the sea for such an object, or if you ever go thither again, you shall never return to England to take charge of my abbey.' The abbot obeyed, and thus quieted all claims of this kind, and the king confirmed the abbey of Battle in its freedom from all subjection to Marmoutier for ever."

From passages like these we can form a pretty good idea how even within the walls of monasteries the influence of the Conqueror was felt in the enforcement of discipline and order. Monasticism under the Saxon rule was always showing symptoms of decay. In the north of England it had reached its highest state of development in the eighth century. The foundation of Whitby abbey by St. Hilda, and of the two monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, in Durham, in the latter of which Bede ended his days, had rendered conspicuous service both to literature and to devotion. Both high and low took refuge from the world in these seclusions. St. Hilda was herself of royal blood; and soon after the death of Bede even the king of Northumbria, to whom he had dedicated his history, abdicated the throne to assume the cowl at Lindisfarne. Another revival took place in the south of England under St. Dunstan, in the tenth century, seconded by the efforts of King Edgar and of Ethelwold bishop of Winchester.

But with all this the number of Saxon monasteries was small, and religious discipline had very much declined before the invasion of the Normans.

Yet it was in these retreats that all the literature the age possessed was written, preserved, and handed down to posterity. Literature, indeed, was but one of several industries continually practised by those communities; for it was only by small societies living in seclusion that the arts of peace and civilization could make any progress in days of violence and barbarism. Hard labour was the essential principle of their discipline; nor would it have been possible for the young communities to subsist without it. Each brother had his appointed work, whether it were in the field, in the garden, in the kitchen, or in the library. The very buildings of the monastery were the work of the monks' own hands; nor was there any kind of drudgery needful to the general weal that was held in disrepute. The "dignity of labour" did not require to be vindicated to men who felt its holiness. The architect and the mason were not divided; and we have it on record that St. Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, carried a hod, and laboured with his own hands at the building of his own cathedral.

Among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, although discipline had relaxed considerably before the conquest, these institutions had still produced very important and salutary effects. It has been remarked that among them, as among the original German races described by Tacitus, agriculture

was in disrepute, or at least very generally neglected. The Saxon laws contain numerous provisions as regards cattle and pasturage, but comparatively few that relate to the enclosure and cultivation of land, or the disposal of its produce. But in every monastery the land was the principal care. Each day after the service of prime the monks assembled in their chapter-house, and the prior assigned to each his particular labour for the day. A few prayers were offered to ask a blessing on their work, and the brethren marched, two and two, in silence to their allotted task in the fields.

“ From Easter till the beginning of October they were thus occupied, from six o’clock in the morning, in some instances until ten, in others until noon, the duration of the labour being probably modified according to the locality of the monastery, or the nature of the occupation. The more widely the system was diffused, the more extensive were its benefits. In addition to the monks, lay brethren and servants were employed in considerable numbers, and as these received payment in corn, their services in turn demanded the cultivation of an increased extent of arable land. When the quantity thus broken up and brought into tillage so far exceeded the immediate requirements of the monastery as to permit some portion of it to be leased out, payment of rent was made rather in labour and in produce than in money; and numerous privileges of various kinds were granted upon the same conditions. Thus each monastery became the central point of civilization.” *

As to literary labour, that was only, like every other industry, a great means of avoiding idleness,

* I have quoted these remarks from Mr. Stevenson’s preface to the second volume of his *Chronicle of Abingdon*, pp. xiv.—xvi.

beneficial to the souls of those who practised it as done for the benefit of others. Some discernment, indeed, was used in the allotment of functions ; but any monk might, at his abbot's desire, be called upon for a time to work with the pen instead of with the spade or the implements of cookery. For monks as a rule were taught to write, but no one was allowed to do so without the permission of his abbot. All the transcribing, and all the original composition, done in the monastery, was done in the *scriptorium*, or writing chamber, by command of the abbot and during the hours of daylight. No one could enter or leave that chamber without permission ; and no one was allowed to execute any other work than the specific task assigned to him. Strict silence was observed in that place of study, and when it was necessary to communicate with the *armarius*, or librarian, the message was conveyed by signs. If the accuracy of a transcript was to be tested by reading aloud, the work was done in an adjoining chamber.

There was also a methodical division of labour. The *armarius* portioned out the work by the abbot's order ; and the writers who had charge of the text left spaces for rubrics, ornamented capitals, vignettes and other illustrations, which were afterwards filled in by other hands. The *armarius* bound up the books, when completed, in wooden covers, inspected the whole library two or three times a year, repaired injured volumes, and took care that they were all properly classified and

marked with their proper titles. He provided the transcribers with parchment, ink, pens, penknives, chalk, pumice-stone for rubbing the parchment, knives to cut it with, awls to mark the lines, a ruler and a plummet, which he himself also used to note omissions in the margin, and a weight to keep down the vellum. He also made contracts with hired transcribers who were occasionally engaged to work outside the monastery.

“The chief work done in the *scriptorium*,” says Sir Thomas Hardy,* to whose researches we are indebted for the information we have just been communicating, “was the transcribing of missals and other service books, not only for the use of the house to which it appertained, but for that of smaller religious houses not sufficiently wealthy to maintain a *scriptorium*. If the writers were not employed on any special work, and a large number of copies of some popular treatise was required, a skilful transcriber, well versed in that particular subject, read aloud, whilst the rest copied from his dictation. To this practice may be attributed the great variety of orthography observable in manuscripts written at the same time and even in the same house. Great pains were taken in copying the classics, the Latin fathers, and all books of scholastic learning; but comparatively little labour seems to have been bestowed on the execution of books relating to national or monastic history, unless they were intended for presents.”

It was only in monasteries that literature could then be produced, and the value of these institutions in preserving records of the principal occurrences must have been recognized at a very early

* Descriptive Catalogue of Materials relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. iii., preface xviii.

period. John Fordun, a late fourteenth century writer, is the earliest authority for a statement that has been disputed by some—that special persons were appointed in the greater abbeys to note events and digest them into annals at the end of every year. But there is ample evidence that in the days of our early kings the monasteries, especially those of royal foundation, were regarded as treasure-houses of important facts and sometimes enjoined to preserve among their own records public documents of high significance. An exemplification of the Charter of Liberties granted by Henry I. was sent to each of the principal abbeys throughout the country. So also was the Magna Charta of King John, which was never recorded in the King's Chancery. So Edward I. in 1291, sent orders by writ of privy seal to various monasteries to search their chronicles and other records for evidence as to the vassalage of Scotland ; and when the sovereignty of that country was afterwards claimed by the pope, he on summoning the parliament at Lincoln in 1301, again ordered similar investigations to be made, and commanded the information found to be transmitted to himself at the parliament. But the most distinct evidence of the truth of Fordun's statement is found in the fact that the historian Matthew Paris in the year 1247, three years before the completion of his *Flores Historiarum*, being present by the king's command at a celebration of the feast of Edward the Confessor, was ordered to take his seat on the

middle step between the throne and the area of the hall, and to write a full account of the proceedings that the facts might always stand on record. It is clear, therefore, that Matthew Paris was distinctly acknowledged as the historiographer of St. Alban's monastery, long before the completion of his history.*

It was in monasteries, then, that past acts were committed to writing; and for a long time after the days of Bede, they were recorded in annals the most bald, dry, and matter-of-fact that could well be imagined. Even after the conquest there was no immediate change in the form of these compositions, nor even is their number very much augmented; for besides the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself there is really but one native source of information to be met with for a long time; and that is a writer in the monastery of Worcester, commonly called Florence of Worcester, who is believed to have translated largely from some copy of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* not now extant.

The work of Florence, however, deserves mention as the earliest example in this country of a kind of composition of which there are many in later times,—a universal chronicle beginning with the creation of the world, and embracing, in due sequence, the history of all nations both ancient and modern. In recent editions of Florence of Worcester, all the earlier portion of the work has been omitted as containing nothing of value to the

* Hardy's Catalogue iii., preface xviii., xx.

modern inquirer, and indeed nothing specially characteristic of the author. The universal chronicle, in fact, was not composed by Florence himself, but was taken from that of Marianus Scotus, an Irishman, who spent the latter half of his life abroad and died at Mayence about the year 1082. This work Florence adopted as his basis and amplified in the latter part with a large number of notices of English affairs, about which Marianus is almost entirely silent. So numerous, indeed, are these interpolations that from the date of the coming of the Saxons into England we almost lose sight of foreign affairs, and of the text of Marianus altogether. Yet the style is still the same as that of the *Saxon Chronicle*,—plain, clear, dry, and matter-of-fact, without either oratorical embellishment or warmth of declamation. The text, in fact, for a long period, is little more than a translation of that *Chronicle*, incorporating also Asser's *Life of Alfred*; and how much is really original on the part of Florence himself it is difficult to say. The *Chronicle* is a most valuable store of facts, but it is nothing more. Two continuations, added to it by other hands, bring down the history to the days of Edward I., and are on the whole somewhat more interesting than the original work.

The latest manuscript of the *Saxon Chronicle*, breaks off abruptly just after the accession of Henry I. It would seem, therefore, that the new literary influences at the court of Henry Beauclerc at once extinguished a mode of recording events

which was no longer necessary. A real Anglo-Saxon literature could not long survive the existence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. After the conquest it became more and more of an anachronism. For a time the facts were recorded as before in what was still the language of the people; but the increased communication with the continent, and with continental scholars in days when every one who could read at all must have been able to read Latin, made it ultimately impossible to continue the practice. So the *Saxon Chronicle* died, as it has been said, of pure exhaustion, and a new race of historians continued the account of this country's progress.

Of these new historians the first was Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury, who wrote, not a universal chronicle, but a history of his own time (*Historia Novorum, sive sui saeculi*) in six books, which has been four times printed. This Eadmer, who is supposed to have been born about the year 1060 (in which case he must have been a child at the time of the Norman Conquest) was a devoted friend of Archbishop Anselm, and shared his exile on the continent when William Rufus was displeased with him. One of the main objects of his work is to give an account of this dispute between the king and the archbishop, which, as is well known, arose on the question of investiture. On this subject, as Sir Thomas Hardy remarks, Eadmer may be naturally suspected of being a partial authority, but that he states the arguments on either side with

apparently great fidelity. After Anselm's death he also enjoyed the friendship of his successor, Archbishop Radulf or Ralph (d'Escures) in whose company he paid a visit to Rome. When he came back he was elected bishop of St. Andrew's, but having a dispute about his consecration with Thurstan, Archbishop of York, he preferred to give up his see and return to his old monastery. He is supposed to have died about the year 1124.*

Eadmer was instigated to compose this work, as he himself tells us in the preface, by the great difficulty which he knew to be experienced by many men in that day in obtaining knowledge of past events ; which made him think that those who had left behind them written accounts of their own times had done a great thing for posterity. The work, however, is more of an ecclesiastical than a political history. Written with great clearness and elegance, it briefly traces the history of the English Church from the days of Edgar and St. Dunstan to those of Lanfranc, and gives a pretty full account of transactions under William Rufus and Henry I. At first the author had intended to conclude with the death of Anselm ; but after completing so much of the history in four books he was induced by the satisfaction the work had given to a large number of readers to add two books more.

As an example of the general character of the work we give a slightly abridged translation of the

* Hardy, ii. 147.

passages relating to the election of Anselm to the see of Canterbury :—

“On the death of William I., his son William II. promised with the most solemn oaths to Archbishop Lanfranc, without whose assent he could not obtain the kingdom (for he feared that the delay of his coronation would entail loss of the coveted honour), that if he became king he would rule the whole kingdom with justice, equity, and mercy, and defend the Church against all who would invade her liberties. But after he was crowned he little regarded this promise, and in answer to the reproaches of Lanfranc he asked in anger, ‘Who is there who can fulfil everything that he has promised?’ After Lanfranc’s death he invaded Canterbury cathedral, took an inventory of the property, taxed the living of the monks, and, in effect, set the rest up to auction to the highest bidder. The king’s satellites invaded the cloisters, demanding the king’s money with threats, to the scandal of religion. Some of the monks sought refuge in other monasteries, the rest endured many trials and outrages. The same cruelty was practised in every monastery or cathedral, on the death of the abbot or bishop, for nearly five years.

“In the fourth year Hugh, Earl of Chester, invited Anselm, Abbot of Bec, into England, to inspect a church within his domains which he intended to convert into a monastery. Anselm declined ; for people had begun to talk about him in private and say that if he came to England he would be made Archbishop of Canterbury, which was quite against his inclination ; indeed, he was firmly resolved not to undertake such an office. The earl, however, fell ill and sent to Anselm, entreating him for old friendship to come to him at once for his spiritual consolation. After repeated messages the earl warned him that if he still delayed to come to him he would regret it through all eternity. Anselm was moved to depart from his resolution. He had other causes, indeed, relating to his own church, for wishing to go to England, but had been restrained hitherto by that one fear of being made

archbishop. He crossed the Channel, landed at Dover, and found the earl recovered from his illness. He was detained in England nearly five months and nothing was said of his promotion, so that he seemed to have escaped the danger he so much apprehended; but on desiring from the king a licence to return, he was refused. Meanwhile the lords assembled at the king's court at Christmas complained of the delay in filling up the see, and urged the king (a thing posterity will hardly credit) that he would allow prayers to be put up in the churches throughout England that God would inspire him with pity to allow a new pastor to be appointed and relieve the Church from its oppression. The king, though enraged, assented, saying whatever the Church demanded he meant to have his own way in the end. The bishops then consulted Anselm, who, though loth to be preferred to them even in such a matter, drew up a form of prayer for the occasion which was approved by the whole nobility.

“ Meanwhile, one of the principal lords happened one day to remark to the king that he knew no man of such sanctity as the Abbot of Bec, for he loved nothing but God, and in all his doings cared for nothing transitory. ‘ For nothing,’ replied the king, derisively, ‘ what, not even for the Archbishopric of Canterbury?’ The other replied, ‘ For that least of all, in my opinion, and in that of many others.’ The king swore that Anselm would run to embrace him, if he had any confidence he could by any means attain to it. And he added, ‘ By the Holy Face of Lucca’ (for so he was wont to swear), ‘ neither he nor any one else but myself shall be archbishop this time.’ On saying this immediately a serious illness overtook him, and laid him on his bed till after some days he seemed on the point of death. All the nobles and councillors assembled, expecting his decease. He was advised to think of the weal of his soul, open the prisons, release the captives, forgive debts, and restore liberty to the churches by allowing them pastors, especially Canterbury, as the oppression to which it had been subjected was known

throughout Christendom. At that time Anselm, ignorant of all this, was staying not far from Gloucester, where the king was ill. He was sent for to come to the king in all haste and to fortify him in the hour of death by his presence. Hearing the news, he makes speed and comes. He enters to the king, is asked what counsel he judged most wholesome for the dying man. He first desires to be informed what had been thought best for the sick man by those about him in his absence. He hears, approves, and adds, ‘It is written, “Begin to the Lord in confession ;” so it appears to me that first of all he should make a pure confession what he knows he has done against God, and promise that if he recover health he will amend everything without feigning, and then order those things which you advise to be done without delay.’ This advice is approved of, and the duty of receiving the confession is committed to himself. It is reported to the king what Anselm thought expedient for the welfare of his soul. He immediately acquiesces, and with compunction of heart promises to do everything that Anselm recommended, and henceforth to lead a life of gentleness and uprightness. To this he pledges his faith, and appoints his bishops as sureties between himself and God, commissioning some of them to make this vow upon the altar in his name. An edict is written out and confirmed with the king’s seal, by which all captives in his dominion are released, all debts irrevocably remitted, all offences heretofore perpetrated committed to perpetual oblivion. The people are, moreover, promised good and holy laws, inviolable observance of justice, and a serious inquiry as to wrongdoings which should terrify others. There was universal joy, and thanks were given to God with prayers for the salvation of such and so great a king.

“Meanwhile the king is advised by some good men to release the common mother of the whole kingdom [the Church of Canterbury] from her state of widowhood. He consents willingly, and confesses he had this in his mind. It is asked, therefore, who could be most worthy of this honour. But all awaiting the king’s reply he himself announced—and universal

applause followed the declaration—that the Abbot Anselm was most worthy. Anselm at this was terror-struck and grew pale ; and when he was taken to the king that he might receive the archiepiscopal investiture from his hand, he resisted with all his power and declared that for many causes it could not be done. The bishops therefore take him apart and say to him, ‘What are you doing ? What do you mean ? Why do you strive against God ? You see that almost all Christianity has perished in England, everything has got into confusion, all abominations have broken out, and everywhere we ourselves and the churches we ought to rule have fallen in danger of eternal death by the tyranny of this man ; and you, when you have power to relieve us, scorn to do so.’ He answered, ‘Bear with me, I pray you. I acknowledge it is true, tribulations are many and have need of help. But consider, I pray. I am old, and impatient of every earthly labour. How then can I, who cannot labour for myself, undertake the labour of the whole Church throughout England ? Moreover, my conscience bears me witness that ever since I became a monk I have shunned secular affairs, nor could I ever willingly apply myself to them, for I find nothing in them to excite interest in me.’ ‘Well,’ said they, ‘do not fear to take upon yourself the primacy of the Church, and go before us in the way of God, giving orders what we shall do and we pledge ourselves to obey you. Do you devote yourself to God for us and we will attend to secular matters for you.’ ‘Impossible,’ he said ; ‘I am abbot of a monastery in another kingdom, having an archbishop over me and an earthly prince to whom I owe subjection, and monks to whom I am bound to afford counsel and aid. I cannot leave my monks without their consent, nor forsake my allegiance without my prince’s permission, nor withdraw myself from obedience to my archbishop without his absolution.’ ‘But you will easily gain the consent of them all,’ said they. Anselm remained obstinate, and was taken to the king, who being told of his persistent refusal was distressed to tears, and said, ‘O Anselm, what is it that you do ? Why do you deliver me

to eternal torments? Remember, I pray you, the faithful friendship my father and mother always bore to you and you to them ; by it I conjure you not to allow their son to perish both in soul and body. For I am sure that I shall so perish if I die keeping the archbishopric in my hands. Help, therefore, good father, and accept the archbishopric, for the retention of which I shall be too much confounded and fear lest I shall be further confounded to eternity.' The bystanders were pricked at these words, and as Anselm still refused to undertake such a charge they broke in, and said to him with some indignation—' What madness has taken possession of you? You annoy the king—you positively kill him. If you do not fear to exasperate him by your obstinacy when he is dying, be assured that all the troubles, oppressions, and crimes which henceforth will press upon England will be imputed to you if you do not obviate them now by accepting the pastoral office.' Placed in these difficulties Anselm turns to two monks that were with him, Baldwin and Eustace, and said to them—' Ah, brothers, why do you not help me?' He said this (before God I lie not) in such a state of anxiety, as he was wont to affirm, that if he had then been given his choice, he would (but for reverence to the will of God) gladly have preferred to die rather than be promoted to the archbishopric. Baldwin therefore replied—' If it be the will of God that it should be so, shall we oppose His will?' These words were followed by tears, and the tears by an effusion of blood from his nostrils, showing plainly to every one from what condition of heart the words proceeded. Hearing this answer, Anselm said, ' Alas, how soon your staff is broken !' The king, therefore, perceiving that all his labour was in vain, ordered them all to fall at his feet, if by any means they could gain his consent. But when they fell, he fell too before the king's feet, nor would he be moved from his first intention. But they being provoked at him, and accusing each other of sloth for the delay which they had suffered in meeting his objections, cried out, ' Bring the pastoral staff, the pastoral staff !' And seizing his right arm, some

dragged, some pushed him to the king's bed-side. The king delivered the staff to him, but he clenched his hand and refused to take it by any means. The bishops attempted to raise his fingers, so as to get the staff put into his hand, but having spent some time in vain in this effort, and he complaining of the injury done him, at length they got the fore-finger raised, which he immediately bent back again, and the staff was placed in his closed hand, and was held down and retained in it by the hands of the bishops. The multitude exclaimed, 'Long live the bishop, long live the bishops and clergy !' They began to chant the *Te Deum*, and carried, rather than led, the elect archbishop into the neighbouring church, he resisting all that he could, and saying, 'It is naught that you do, it is naught.' The usual ceremonies being performed, Anselm returns to the king and says to him—'I tell you, lord king, that in this illness you will not die, and for this reason I wish you to know how you may well correct what has now been done about me, because I never granted, nor do I grant, that it is valid.' This said, he turned back and departed from him. But the bishops and all the nobility leading him away, he passed out of the chamber. Then turning to them, he broke out in these words : 'Do you know what it is you attempt ? You propose to yoke an untamed bull and an old and feeble sheep together in one yoke to the plough. And what will come of it ? The untameable fierceness of the bull will so tear the sheep, dragging it hither and thither through thorns and brambles, that though fruitful in wool, milk, and lambs, if it do not throw off the yoke, it will be unable to yield any of these things, and will be no longer of any service, either to itself or any one else. You have acted unwisely. Have regard to the plough of the Church, as the Apostle says (1 Cor. iii. 9), "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building." This plough in England two specially strong oxen draw and govern, the king and the Archbishop of Canterbury—the one in secular justice and dominion, the other in divine teaching and authority. One of these oxen, Archbishop Lanfranc, is dead ; the other, with

the untameable ferocity of a bull, is now found in possession of the plough, and you, instead of the dead ox, wish to yoke me, an old feeble sheep, with the untamed bull !' With these and other words, unable to disguise his grief of heart he burst into tears and went to his own home."

I have been the more willing to quote this remarkable passage at length, or with very slight abridgment here and there, because it has never been translated before, and the substance of the facts it contains is known to the general reader only through modern biographers of Anselm, who interpret his conduct according to the bent of their own minds. Taken in its simplicity, as I think it ought to be, it certainly contains things that the writer was justified in suspecting posterity would hardly credit. But on the other hand, it surely exhibits to us one of the most typical examples, and reveals with peculiar distinctness the character of the great struggle going on in that day between temporal and spiritual authority. It was, in fact, the struggle between power and conscience ; between power, ever strongly desirous to assert itself, and conscience anxious to decline, if possible, a very unequal combat. It was an age when conscience only seemed safe in the seclusion of a monastery and by no means desired to be dragged from thence by violence to do battle with the kings of this world. Yet, somehow, as will happen in all ages, even kings could not do altogether without it ; and the recluse had to be brought forth into the light of day to speak his mind before the rulers

of the earth. Anselm's strong reluctance to assume responsibility gave his words all the greater weight when it was forced upon him; and though driven into exile afterwards for his integrity, he was recalled by Henry I. on his accession, in a manner which showed clearly that conscience had won the victory. "I," wrote the new king to the refugee, "I, by the will of God, elected by the clergy and people of England, and, although unwillingly on account of your absence, now consecrated king, along with the whole people of England, beseech you as a father that you will come as soon as possible and give counsel to me your son, and to the same people the care of whose souls is committed to you. Myself and the people of the whole realm of England I commit to your counsel and to that of those who ought to counsel me along with you."

The seclusion of a monastery is not the kind of influence which we should naturally expect to promote a knowledge of the world. Yet even in this respect the monk of those days appears to advantage in comparison with the rough warriors and kings of whom he tells us. The seclusion, in fact, as what we have related clearly shows, was by no means so close as to prevent a very considerable amount of contact with the outer world. Either in the affairs of his house, or for some other reason, an abbot found it occasionally necessary to go, or send one of his brethren, into other countries—most frequently to Rome; and in the case of Eadmer, we

have a junior member of a monastic house accompanying an archbishop on that journey. At Rome, the very centre of the world, the monk learned to appreciate the politics of his own day in a way that no one else could ; and he carried back into his convent and imparted to his brethren a more or less sagacious account of all that was going on. It was impossible that the tyranny of his own king should altogether tame him when escape to Rome was at once a safety-valve and means of enlightenment which enabled him to hold the king himself in check. In the convent he could take counsel with his brethren, men who probably knew far more about European affairs, as well as the past history of their own country, than the king's council itself. It was in monasteries, therefore, that the great statesmen of the day were educated ; and by their influence even the selfish and capricious conduct of tyrants was reduced to something like a practical aim, and governed by an intelligible purpose.

At present, however, we are concerned with the monk only in his capacity of historian.

Eadmer was avowedly the historian of his own times only, and, as we have seen, his sole concern is with ecclesiastical affairs. But he was immediately followed by other writers, who took a more comprehensive view, tracing the whole course of English history, alike in its ecclesiastical and in its civil and political aspects, back from the days of Bede, and adding very lively descriptions of what was done in their own day. To these historians we must now turn our attention.

William of Malmesbury, as he himself informs us,* was partly of English, and partly of Norman parentage,—a circumstance from which, as he considered, and we have no doubt truly, he was able to take a more dispassionate view of the acts of William the Conqueror than was commonly done in his day by either party. He was born apparently about thirty years after the conquest, as it appears by some of his writings that Henry I. was dead when he attained his fortieth year, and he also mentions having witnessed, when a boy, certain things which took place at Malmesbury in the time of Abbot Godfrey, who died in the year 1105. He was probably placed at Malmesbury by his parents for the sake of his education, in which he shows that they both took very great interest. From his childhood he took a delight in books, in which he was encouraged by his father, and the love of literature grew with advancing years. “Indeed,” he says, “I was so instructed by my father that, had I turned aside to other pursuits, I should have considered it as jeopardy to my soul and discredit to my character.” In due time he became a monk at the place where he was brought up. He collected books for the use of the monastery, and was made their librarian, and afterwards precentor. In the year 1140, when the monastery, which had been annexed by Roger, bishop of Salisbury, to his see, obtained leave on his death to choose its own abbots as formerly, William declined that very

* *Gesta Regum*, Book iii, preface.

onerous office in favour of his colleague John, by whom the house, as he states, was rescued from thraldom.* In 1141 he took part in the council at Winchester against King Stephen; and he probably died in or shortly after 1142, the year in which his latest work, the *Historia Novella* abruptly comes to an end.

This is all that is known of the life of the man. Of his intellectual capacity and literary powers his works bear witness. His reputation as an author in his own day was wide-spread, and he received requests from various monasteries to write the history of their communities or the lives of their patron saints; in compliance with which he wrote for the monks of Glastonbury the lives of St. Patrick and St. Dunstan, besides other treatises of the miracles and martyrdoms of particular saints. His industry appears to have been unflagging, and in the composition of his principal works he seems to have exhausted all the materials that were then available. But what is more remarkable is the clear and lucid style in which he has woven all the information that he found into a connected narrative. He is a genuine historian, not a dry compiler of annals like the writers who preceded him; and he himself feels keenly the disgrace that no one since the days of Bede had succeeded in producing a readable history of English affairs.

Nor is his work less valuable in respect of the

* "Hardy's Descriptive Catalogue," ii. 155. W. Malm., *Gesta Reg. and Hist. Novella*.

judgment he displays in dealing with the information handed down to him. In many instances, recording a doubtful story, he is careful to state that he reports it merely as it was given to him ; and even in writing about the miracles of saints he is generally anxious to make the first authors of those legends responsible for their truth. His mind had received a training in youth which evidently had raised him greatly above the superstitions of the time and made him an excellent judge of evidences, both physical and moral. He tells us himself of his early studies that he had devoted himself to various branches of literature, though not with equal ardour. In logic he had been content merely to be a listener. Medicine he had studied with somewhat more attention. "But now," he says, "having scrupulously examined the several branches of ethics, I bow down to its majesty, because it spontaneously unveils itself to those who study it, and directs their minds to moral practice ; history more especially, which, by an agreeable recapitulation of past events, excites its readers by example to frame their lives to the pursuit of good, or to aversion from evil. When, therefore, at my own expense I had procured historians of foreign nations, I proceeded during my domestic leisure, to inquire if anything concerning our own country could be found worthy of handing down to posterity. Hence it arose that, not content with the writings of ancient times, I began myself to compose ; not, indeed to display any learning,

which is comparatively nothing, but to bring to light events lying concealed in the confused mass of antiquity. In consequence, rejecting vague opinions, I have studiously sought for chronicles far and near, though I confess I have scarcely profited anything by this industry ; for perusing them all, I still remained poor in information, though I ceased not my researches as long as I could find anything to read."

His two principal works are named "The Acts of the English Kings" (*Gesta Regum Anglorum*), and "The Acts of the English Bishops" (*Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*). Another treatise giving an account of the abbey of Glastonbury from its supposed foundation by Joseph of Arimathæa, to the author's own time, contains some particulars of manners and customs. But the *Acts of the Kings* is, as its name implies, his most important contribution to the political history of England.

This work extends from the coming of the Saxons into England to the twenty-eighth year of King Henry I., or the year of our Lord 1128. In some manuscripts it only comes down to the year 1120, where it would seem the author himself brought the work to a close ; but an examination of the different manuscripts, shows that he issued at least three editions of it, if not more. He moreover afterwards added a continuation under the title of *Historia Novella*, or Modern History, bringing the narrative of events down to the year 1142 ; and it would seem he corrected the original work in some

places even after it was finally completed, of which we have an interesting example at the end of the fourth book. Speaking of the career of Robert Curthose, of Normandy, the eldest son of the Conqueror, and how he was finally deprived even of the Duchy of Normandy, and shut up in prison by his brother King Henry ; the author added, as we find in one manuscript, "and whether he ever will be set free is doubtful." But the reading in most of the manuscripts is, "nor was he ever liberated till the day of his death," showing clearly that the text was amended several years after the conclusion of the history, for Robert did not die till 1134.

The materials of the earlier portion of the work are of course derived from other writers ; and these, for the most part, can be pretty well identified. Bede and the *Saxon Chronicle* are among the chief ; but the writings of Alcuin, of Ethelwerd, of Eadmer, of William of Poitiers and a number of other authors, both native and foreign, were certainly among his authorities. In short, there was no available source of information of which he did not make ample use.

The third book, leaving for a time the current of English history, begins with an account of the career of William the Conqueror's father and of himself in Normandy, and then describes the battle of Hastings. The author's comments on that great event are deeply significant of the causes of the victory and the success of Norman rule in England :—

“ This was a fatal day to England, a melancholy havoc of our dear country, through its change of masters. For it had long since adopted the manners of the Angles, which had been very various according to the times; for in the first year of their arrival they were barbarians in their looks and manners, warlike in their usages, heathens in their rules; but, after embracing the faith of Christ, by degrees, and in process of time, from the peace they enjoyed, regarding arms only in a secondary light, they gave their whole attention to religion. I say nothing of the poor, the meanness of whose fortune often restrains them from overstepping the bounds of justice. I omit men of ecclesiastical rank, whom sometimes respect to their profession and sometimes the fear of shame, suffer not to deviate from the truth; I speak of princes, who from the greatness of their power might have full liberty to indulge in pleasure; some of whom in their own country, and others at Rome, changing their habit, obtained a heavenly kingdom and a saintly intercourse. Many during their whole lives in outward appearance only embraced the present world, in order that they might exhaust their treasures on the poor, or divide them amongst monasteries. What shall I say of the multitudes of bishops, hermits, and abbots? Does not the whole island blaze with such numerous relics of its natives that you can scarcely pass a village of any consequence but you hear the name of some new saint, besides the numbers of whom all notices have perished through the want of records? Nevertheless, in process of time, the desire after literature and religion had decayed for several years before the arrival of the Normans. The clergy, contented with a very slight degree of learning, could hardly stammer out the words of the sacraments; and a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment. The monks mocked the rule of their order by fine vestments and the use of every kind of food. The nobility, given up to luxury and wantonness, went not to church in the morning after the manner of Christians, but merely, in a careless manner, heard matins and masses from a hurrying priest in their chambers, amid the blandish-

ments of their wives. The commonalty, left unprotected, became a prey to the most powerful, who amassed fortunes by either seizing on their property, or by selling their persons into foreign countries ; although it be an innate quality of this people to be more inclined to revelling than to the accumulation of wealth. There was one custom, repugnant to nature, which they adopted ; namely, to sell their female servants when pregnant by them, and after they had satisfied their lust, either to public prostitution, or foreign slavery. Drinking in parties was a universal practice, in which occupation they passed entire nights as well as days. They consumed their whole substance in mean and despicable houses ; unlike the Normans and French, who in noble and splendid mansions lived with frugality. The vices attendant on drunkenness, which enervate the human mind, followed ; hence it arose that engaging William, more with rashness and precipitate fury than military skill, they doomed themselves and their country to slavery by one, and that an easy, victory. ‘For nothing is less effective than rashness ; and what begins with violence quickly ceases, or is repelled.’ In fine, the English at that time, wore short garments reaching to the mid-knee ; they had their hair cropped, their beards shaven, their arms laden with golden bracelets, their skin adorned with punctured designs. They were accustomed to eat till they became surfeited, and to drink till they were sick. These latter qualities they imparted to their conquerors ; as to the rest, they adopted their manners. I would not, however, have these bad propensities universally ascribed to the English. I know that many of the clergy at that day, trod the paths of sanctity, by a blameless life : I know that many of the laity, of all ranks and conditions in this nation, were well pleasing to God. Be injustice far from this account ; the accusation does not involve the whole indiscriminately ; ‘But as in peace the mercy of God often cherishes the bad and the good together, so equally does His severity sometimes include them both in captivity.’

“ Moreover, the Normans, that I may speak of them also,

were at that time, and are even now, proudly apparelled; delicate in their food, but not excessive. They are a race inured to war, and can hardly live without it ; fierce in rushing against the enemy ; and where strength fails of success, ready to use stratagem, or to corrupt by bribery. As I have related, they live in large edifices with economy ; envy their equals ; wish to excel their superiors ; and plunder their subjects, though they defend them from others ; they are faithful to their bonds, though a slight offence renders them perfidious. They weigh treachery by its chance of success, and change their sentiments with money. They are, however, the kindest of nations, and they esteem strangers worthy of equal honour with themselves. They also intermarry with their vassals. They revived, by their arrival, the observances of religion, which were everywhere grown lifeless in England. You might see churches rise in every village, and monasteries in the towns and cities, built after a style unknown before ; you might behold the country flourishing with renovated rites ; so that each wealthy man accounted that day lost to him, which he had neglected to signalize by some magnificent action."

Book III., from which the above extract is taken, is entirely occupied with the history of William the Conqueror and his contemporaries. Book IV., in like manner, is devoted to William Rufus and to the first Crusade ; and nowhere do the vigour and liveliness of the author appear to greater advantage than in describing that great movement. No language, indeed, could better enable us to realize an age of enthusiasm than the following :—

“ This ardent love not only inspired the continental provinces, but even all who had heard the name of Christ, whether in the most distant islands or savage countries. The Welshman left his hunting, the Scot his fellowship with

vermin, the Dane his drinking party, the Norwegian his raw fish. Lands were deserted of their husbandmen ; houses of their inhabitants ; even whole cities migrated. There was no regard to relationship ; affection to their country was held in little esteem ; God alone was placed before their eyes. Whatever was stored in granaries, or hoarded in chambers, to answer the hopes of the avaricious husbandman, or the covetousness of the miser, all, all was deserted ; they hungered and thirsted after Jerusalem alone. Joy attended such as proceeded, while grief oppressed those who remained. But why do I say remained ? You might see the husband departing with his wife, indeed with all his family ; you would smile to see the whole household laden on a carriage, about to proceed on their journey. The road was too narrow for the passengers, the path too confined for the travellers, so thickly were they thronged with endless multitudes. The number surpassed all human imagination, though the itinerants were estimated at six millions. Doubtless, never did so many nations unite in one opinion ; never did so immense a population subject their unruly passions to one, and almost to no direction. For the strangest wonder to behold was, that such a countless multitude marched gradually through various Christian countries without plundering, though there was none to restrain them. Mutual regard blazed forth in all ; so that if any one found in his possession what he knew did not belong to him, he exposed it everywhere for several days to be owned ; and the desire of the finder was suspended till perchance the wants of the loser might be repaired."

No one will say after reading passages like these that literary art and descriptive power were unknown among writers of the middle ages. William of Malmesbury was essentially a pictorial writer, and nothing can exceed the skill with which he depicts events and incidents. We are thankful to him not only for graphic accounts of the actions,

but for personal notices of many of the leaders in the Crusade, which are full of interest. We are told how Godfrey of Boulogne, at the siege of Antioch, "with a Lorrainian sword cut asunder a Turk who had demanded single combat, and one-half of the man lay panting on the ground while the horse, at full speed, carried away the other, so firmly the miscreant sat," adds the historian, with an involuntary admiration of the fighting qualities, even of an infidel, though he is firmly persuaded all along that the very same pertinacity and valour which were glorious beyond measure in the service of the Cross were the reverse of admirable in its enemies. Robert of Normandy, son of William the Conqueror, is described to the very life with his short stature, projecting belly, his easy good nature, improvidence, and fitful indignation. We understand most perfectly the man who was always throwing away his advantages, and can almost sympathise with the feeling of the historian, that his misfortunes were a punishment for that ignoble love of ease which led him to reject the kingdom of Jerusalem. He is altogether a remarkable contrast to his brother Henry Beauclerc, whose character is portrayed at even greater length. Born in England after his father's coming over, he was cherished by all about him more than his elder brothers, to all of whom, it seems to have been thought, he would have been preferred in the succession. The care bestowed on his education bore good fruit. He used to say in his father's

hearing that "an illiterate king is a crowned ass," and when he came to the crown himself his learning, in William of Malmesbury's opinion, assisted him much in the science of governing. This writer extols highly the politic arts that he had learned from philosophy, the energy and decision of his character, the inflexible firmness with which he administered justice. And in those days, it is to be observed, justice was administered by the king personally, sometimes in a very rough and primitive fashion, which seems rather amusing. "The measure of his own arm," says the chronicler, "was applied to correct the false ell of the traders, and enjoined for the followers of his court at whichever of his possessions he might be resident; and they were instructed what they should accept without payment from the country folks, and how much, and at what price they should purchase, the transgressors being punished by a heavy fine or loss of life."

Comparatively little is said in this book about the political history of Henry's reign. There is an interesting account of his first queen Matilda, and of the unfortunate drowning of his son William. There is also mention of the marriage of his daughter Maud to the Emperor Henry V., and an account of that Emperor's dispute with Pope Paschal. But the religious revival of which the foundation of Reading Abbey was one indication appears to have made a deeper impression on the author than the political events of his own day;

and the work concludes with some notices of the more remarkable churchmen or heads of religious houses who had recently died in the odour of sanctity.

The *Historia Novella* of William of Malmesbury, though commonly regarded as a continuation of the *Gesta Regum*, is really a separate work undertaken at the request of Robert, Earl of Gloucester, natural son of Henry I., for the express purpose of recording certain very notable events which at the time had recently taken place in England, as the author says, “through the miraculous power of God.” The events thus alluded to were simply those of the contest between King Stephen and the Empress Maud, in which the Earl of Gloucester himself took a very prominent part; and it might, perhaps, be considered from this that the treatise is somewhat of a partisan character. But it is certainly written in the style of an impartial historian, and has never yet been taxed with unfairness. The author, indeed, does not confine himself merely to those subjects which concern the civil war in England, but in his introductory chapter gives some account among other things of the double papal election after the death of Honorius II. He also condescends to notice matters characteristic of the times which were by no means of such momentous consequence; and the reader will feel grateful for the following anecdote which occurs in his brief summary of the later years of Henry I. :—

“ In his twenty-eighth year the king returned from Normandy ; in his twenty-ninth a circumstance occurred in England which may seem surprising to our long-haired gallants, who, forgetting what they were born, transform themselves into the fashion of females by the length of their locks. A certain English knight, who prided himself on the luxuriancy of his tresses, being stung by conscience on the subject, seemed to feel in a dream as though some person strangled him with his ringlets. Awaking in a fright, he immediately cut off all his superfluous hair. The example spread throughout England ; and, as recent punishment is apt to affect the mind, almost all military men allowed their hair to be cropped in a proper manner, without reluctance. But this decency was not of long continuance ; for scarcely had a year expired ere all who thought themselves courtly relapsed into their former vice ; they vied with women in length of locks, and, wherever they were defective, put on false tresses ; forgetful, or rather ignorant, of the saying of the Apostle, ‘ If a man nurture his hair, it is a shame to him. ’

It seems an extraordinary thing to hear of such effeminate tastes in the turbulent times in which our author wrote ; for it is clear from what he says that it must have been a prevalent fashion even after the death of Henry I., and during the civil war in Stephen’s time.

Of the reign of King Stephen we have two original narratives besides that given in the *Historia Novella* of Malmesbury. The first is an anonymous fragment entitled the *Gesta Stephani*, derived, unfortunately, from one single manuscript in which some passages are obliterated and the end entirely lost. There is no doubt, however, that it is the work of a contemporary who was an eye-witness of

some of the scenes he describes in it. The writer also appears to have been a churchman—some have supposed the king's confessor. It is not unreasonable, at least, as remarked by his editor, Dr. Sewell, to think that he was a Norman; a friend, and perhaps a connection of the king. Sir Thomas Hardy, however, while agreeing that he was a foreigner, thinks that he lived either in Herefordshire or Gloucestershire, as he notices those parts of the kingdom more frequently than others; and if this conjecture be right, he could hardly have been the king's confessor. Although he keeps to the true order of events he never gives a date; and though his style has been criticised as being rather florid and diffuse there is only one place in which he has been suspected of exaggerating. This is at the very beginning where he describes a state of anarchy and confusion to have arisen on the death of Henry I., in which even the brute creation is described as having shared. The bonds of government were relaxed, the ties even of relationship were disregarded, war and riot broke loose throughout the land. Even the wild animals formerly preserved in parks were let loose and were hunted freely by every one. "This, indeed," says the writer, "was a minor calamity not much to be complained of; and yet it was wonderful how so many myriads of wild animals, which in large herds before plentifully stocked the country, suddenly disappeared, so that out of this vast number scarcely two could now be found together. They

seemed to be entirely extirpated, insomuch that it is reported a single bird was a rare sight, and a stag was nowhere to be seen."

Unless this extermination of the beasts and birds be an exaggeration, it is hard to say what else there is in the author's picture of the time to which we should be specially on our guard against giving credit. The only reason given for distrust is that Henry I. died on the 1st December, 1135, and that Stephen immediately left Normandy and was crowned on the 22nd of the same month. But surely a vast deal of disorder may take place within the period of three weeks, and it is evident even from the narrative itself that the mere announcement of Stephen's coronation throughout the land did not suffice to restore tranquillity. It was one of the things to which he pledged himself at his coronation that he would do his utmost to pacify the kingdom, and according to our author he thereupon took up arms against the bands of robbers "who ravaged that part of the kingdom" (that is to say the southern part), and by successfully encountering them "he made his name great at the very beginning of his reign."

His success in obtaining the crown was greatly owing to his brother Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester and papal legate, who received him before his coronation in his own cathedral city, spoken of by our author as the second city of the kingdom, and helped to put him in possession of the late king's hoarded wealth. But the archbishop

of Canterbury refused to perform the rite of coronation until the new king's title was sufficiently cleared of objections :—

“ For the king, he argued, is chosen for the purpose of governing all, and that when elected he may enforce the rights of his government on all ; so then it is plain that all should make common agreement in confirming his election, and that it should be determined by common consent whether it shall be ratified or annulled. He added that king Henry in his lifetime had bound all the principal men of the realm by a most solemn oath not to acknowledge the title of any one after his own death but his daughter, who was married to the Count of Anjou, or, if he himself survived her, his daughter's heir. Therefore there was great presumption in endeavouring to set aside this engagement, the more especially as not only was king Henry's daughter living, but she was favoured in having heirs of her body. To this the king's partisans replied with confidence, ‘ We do not deny that king Henry's policy on the marriage of his daughter was wise, as it led to a firm and stable peace between the people of Normandy and Anjou, between whom there were frequent disturbances. With respect to the succession, that imperious king, whom no one could resist, with a voice of thunder compelled, rather than persuaded, the great men of the kingdom to take the oath of fealty ; for though he foresaw that an involuntary oath would not be considered binding, still he wished, like Ezekiel, to have peace in his days, and by the marriage of one woman create a bond of union between countless multitudes. We willingly admit that this thing was agreeable to him while he lived, but we say that he would not have been satisfied that it should be unalterable after his death ; for those who stood round him when he was at the last extremity, and listened to his true confession, heard him plainly express his repentance for the oath which he had enforced on his barons. Since, therefore, it is evident that an oath extracted by violence from any man cannot subject him to the charge of perjury,

it is both allowable and acceptable that we should freely acknowledge for king him whom the city of London, the metropolis of the kingdom, received without opposition, and who founds his claims on his lawful right, through his mother, the late king's sister. We are also firmly convinced that by acknowledging him and supporting him with all our power, we shall confer the greatest benefit on the kingdom, which, now torn, distracted, and trodden down, will in the very crisis of its fate be restored to order, by the efforts of a man of firmness and valour, who being exalted by the power of his adherents and the wisdom of his brothers, whatever was wanting in himself would be fully supplied by their aid.'"

This minute report of a debate in council suggests strongly either that the writer was actually present, or that he had very special means of information as to what took place. It is true, historians of all ages introduce occasionally into their works made-up harangues and speeches ; but in this case we have a set of arguments and counter-arguments which we have no reason to doubt were actually advanced on the one side and on the other, leading to an ultimate decision in favour of the coronation of Stephen. In substance, moreover, the proceedings of this council are confirmed by other authorities ; and the graphic touch about the impious king Henry I. and his voice of thunder has a value of its own not to be overlooked. We see, under any circumstances, how slender were the guarantees by which the succession, even of the lineal heir, could be secured in those days, and yet, how important it was felt to be that the election of the new sovereign should not be ratified by the religious rite of con-

secration without a full investigation of his pretensions and an assurance that no past pledges should be violated.

The archbishop anointed and consecrated Stephen, and almost all the great men of England then did homage to him, notwithstanding the oath they had taken to Maud in the lifetime of her father. Even her half-brother Robert, Earl of Gloucester, though he afterwards supported her cause so warmly, took the oath and was received into favour, and his submission was followed by that of almost all the rest of England. The new king, it would seem, began well. “In tranquillising the kingdom and consolidating its peace, he was courteous and obliging to all men ; he restored the exiles to their estates ; in conferring ecclesiastical dignities he was free from the sin of simony ; and justice was administered without bribe or reward. He treated with respect churchmen of all ages and ranks ; and so kind and gentle was his demeanour that, forgetful of his royal dignity, on many occasions he gave way, in others he put himself on an equality with, and sometimes even seemed to be inferior to, his subjects.” But the pacification of England proved to be no very easy matter. First, the Welsh were troublesome, and he sent out an ineffectual expedition against them. Then Baldwin de Rivers rose at Exeter ; but the king laid siege to the city, and after reducing it to the last extremities at length allowed the emaciated garrison, dying of thirst, to march out with arms and property and

take service with whatever other lord they pleased. Baldwin himself had meanwhile withdrawn into the Isle of Wight, which was a part of his territories, and fortified himself there in a castle, probably Carisbrooke, which he had stocked with an abundant supply of provisions. "But by the interposition of Providence," says our author, "the springs had been dried up by a sudden drought, and Baldwin and his adherents, embarking in a fresh struggle with the king, were utterly ruined." He was driven into exile, and took refuge with Henry, count of Anjou, the son of the empress Maud.

The narrative here begins to speak of the king's measures against Normandy, but owing to the mutilation of the manuscript the account of his recovery of that duchy is lost. The scene accordingly shifts to the siege of Bedford, which is held by Miles de Beauchamp against the king in 1138, but is reduced by famine. Then comes an account of the irruption of the Scots, but another mutilation deprives us of this author's account of the battle of the Standard. The story is resumed with the rebellion at Bristol, under Earl Robert of Gloucester, and goes on to show how the king garrisoned Bath, and after abandoning the intention of besieging Bristol itself, reduced some other fortresses; and once more the manuscript breaks off abruptly. It is worth noticing, however, at this part of the narrative, that our author gives brief descriptions both of Bristol and Bath, which are of considerable interest; and what he says of the former city will

enable us to realise the strength of Earl Robert's position :—

“ Bristol is the most opulent city of all those parts, as its shipping brings merchandise to it from the neighbouring coasts and from foreign parts. It is situated in the most fertile part of England, and its position is stronger than that of any other town. Like what we read of Brundusium, it stands where a tongue of land, extending between two rivers which wash it on both sides, forms a flat at the confluence of the rivers, on which the city is built. The tide flows fresh and strong from the sea every day and night, and draws back the waters of the river on both sides of the city, forming a basin in which a thousand ships can conveniently and safely ride, and so encompassing the circuit of the town that it may be said to float on the waters, and appears in every quarter to touch the river banks. On one side, where it lies more open to attack, the castle stands on a raised mound, fortified with a wall, and outworks and towers, and furnished with engines of various kinds to defend it against assaults.”

Our author next recounts the story of the breach between the king and the three bishops who had been the leading ministers of Henry I., and how the king laid hands on them and forced them to surrender their castles. A period of anarchy and violence ensues, in the midst of which the Empress Maud, or, as this writer invariably calls her, the Countess of Anjou, lands with her brother Robert, Earl of Gloucester, at Arundel. Various rebellious barons are encouraged by the event ; and though the king meets the danger with great intrepidity, his success is only partial. While the king defeats the rebels in some quarters, rebel forces besiege the king's troops elsewhere, and capture garrisons. The

bishop of Ely takes arms against the king, and attempts to hold against him the whole Isle of Ely, at that time considered an impregnable fortress, as being accessible only by a narrow road through the water, defended by a strong castle. But one of the monks, as it was believed, played traitor to the bishop, and suggested to the king another mode by which the island might be entered. A bridge of boats was formed where the current seemed most slack ; and after the king's men had crossed the main stream by this bridge, they forded the adjoining marshes under the monk's guidance. The traitor received his reward. "We saw him afterwards," says our author, "thanks, not to St. Peter's key but to Simon's, admitted into the church and made abbot of Ramsey ; and we know that afterwards he was subject to much trouble and affliction, the Almighty justly punishing secret offences on account of his unlawful intrusion into the church."

The king is described as continually moving about to meet his enemies, drawn at one time into Cornwall, at another back into Lincoln. Nor do his enemies constitute anything like a united party. Individual nobles take castles for their own benefit, and refuse to give them up to others, either for king or empress. At Lincoln the king is taken prisoner by Earl Robert, who carries him off to Bristol. Maud is proclaimed queen in London, but on her making exorbitant demands on the citizens a plot is formed against her, and she makes

a precipitate flight. Stephen's queen causes a reaction in his favour, and even gains over his wary and cautious brother, the bishop of Winchester; but not trusting him entirely she seizes the city of Winchester herself, which is then besieged by the Earl of Gloucester, and others, while the queen and the bishop bring men from all parts to harass the besiegers. "All England," says the writer, "was there in arms with a great conflux of foreigners." The struggle is a critical one, and the besiegers find it necessary to raise a fort at Wherwell, six miles off, a place where there is a nunnery. But while doing so they are attacked by the king's party, and driven into the church, which is deserted and set on fire. The king's enemies are forced to surrender, unconditionally, while the flames burst forth from the roof of the monastery, and the nuns, compelled to turn out for their lives, fill the air with shrieks and lamentations. The siege of Winchester is abandoned, the besiegers driven away in shameful rout, the earl of Gloucester taken prisoner, and the king once more set at liberty.

Such is a brief outline of the contents of the first book of this very spirited narrative. In the second the story is carried down to the arrival of Henry, afterwards Henry II., in England; so that, but for the mutilation of the manuscript, this work would have contained a complete account of nearly the whole, or perhaps actually the whole reign of Stephen. The most interesting incident in the second part is the escape of Maud, when besieged

at Oxford by the king, over the frozen Thames, while the country was white with snow.

“What was very remarkable, and indeed truly miraculous, she crossed dryshod, and without wetting her garments, the very waters into which the king and his troops had plunged up to their neck on their advance to attack the city ; she passed too through the royal posts, while the silence of night was broken all around by the clang of trumpets, and the cries of the guard, without losing a single man of her escort, and observed only by one man of the king’s troops who had been wrought with to favour her escape.”

For historical purposes, as Dr. Sewell very justly points out, the *Historia Novella* of William of Malmesbury should be read along with the *Gesta Stephani*, page by page. “Each,” says Dr. Sewell, “reflects light on the other, and, what is still more extraordinary under such circumstances, each confirms the other.” The partisan of Stephen and the partisan of the Earl of Gloucester are at one on almost every point as to matters of fact. And to these two must be further added the account given of Stephen’s reign by Henry of Huntingdon, a writer whose sympathies, like those of Malmesbury, are on the side of that king’s enemies. Still there is on the whole a wonderful agreement as to facts ; and even the moral judgments pronounced by these different writers do not differ so greatly as we should be naturally led to expect.

Henry of Huntingdon belongs properly to a different class of writers from those of whom we have been speaking ; for it would seem that he was

not a monk at all, and if we were to adhere strictly to the subject of this chapter, he ought not to be noticed here. But of course we are treating generally of the historical literature of a period when there were few but monkish authors, and it is by no means certain that we have not already met with an exception in the author of the *Gesta Stephani*. In Huntingdon, however, the style itself almost seems to betray a man of a different class—a lover of liberty, not tied to strict rules of life, and not accustomed, perhaps, to rigid accuracy of thought, or of investigation. His easy, interesting, and fluent narrative, breaking out occasionally into poetry, differs certainly not a little in character, even from the lively pages of William of Malmesbury. Yet it is equally characteristic of the new era and of the revival of letters which began under Henry Beauclerc. For with all his warmth of colouring he is a true historian, who seems to have weighed authorities in his own mind, moralises upon events, and draws his own conclusions. Impressed with a sense, that “there is nothing in this world more excellent than accurately to investigate and trace out the course of worldly affairs,” he remarks in his dedication to Alexander, bishop of Lincoln—

“ History brings the past to view as if it were present, and enables us to judge of the future by picturing to ourselves the past. Besides, the knowledge of former events has this further preëminence, that it forms a main distinction between brutes and rational creatures. For brutes, whether they be men or beasts, neither know nor wish to know, whence they

come, nor their own origin, nor the annals and revolutions of the country they inhabit. Of the two, I consider men in this brutal state to be the worst, because what is natural in the case of beasts, is the lot of men from their want of sense ; and what beasts could not acquire if they would, such men will not though they could."

In such fashion does this author give utterance to the thoughts that were in him. Even when he descends from the abstract to the particular, the freedom with which he comments upon men and things is no less remarkable. He does not spare criticism even of friends and patrons. In regard to facts, however, he is generally careful, and though with a warm and imaginative nature he has perhaps laid himself open to the charge of exaggeration here and there, it is impossible to question his general fidelity. Of his judgment, moreover, as an historian, we are led to think highly from his discriminating use of Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the authorities on which he mainly depended for the earlier portion of his history. On the whole, he gives none but the really important facts, omitting nearly all the miraculous legends and minor incidents, with which the pages of the former historian abound. At the same time it must be acknowledged that he amplifies very considerably on his predecessors, and if he is not following in some places the guidance of tradition or of authorities not now extant he must certainly be credited with some use of the inventive faculty. His value, however, as an historian, is of course

chiefly in relation to his own period. But it is time that we should say something of the man himself, and his surroundings.

Henry of Huntingdon was the son of Nicholas, a distinguished ecclesiastic and probably a dignitary of the church at Lincoln. In England the celibacy of the clergy was not at that time very rigidly insisted on, and Henry himself avows his origin without any show of sensitiveness on the subject. The Roman custom, however, was then extending itself, and in a synod held at London in 1102 the clergy were for the first time forbidden to live with wives. Henry of Huntingdon himself remarks on the novelty of the prohibition, and observes that "some saw danger in a strictness which, requiring a continence above their strength, might lead them to disgrace their Christian profession." The ordinance was enacted just eight years before his father's death, when he himself was probably past boyhood. There is some reason for supposing that his father was his predecessor in the archdeaconry of Huntingdon, which was conferred upon him by Bishop Bloet, on the death of an archdeacon Nicholas; about which time, as the author tells us, Cambridgeshire was separated from the see of Lincoln, and attached to the new bishopric of Ely. Now the see of Ely was erected in 1109, and Henry of Huntingdon tells us that his father died in 1110, so that the expression "about the time" would be correct if he succeeded his father Nicholas.

As a child, he was placed for his education in

the family of Robert Bloet, Bishop of Lincoln, of whose magnificent household he gives a lively picture in his "Letter to Walter," an old friend of his youth, written when both he and Walter were advanced in years. "I saw," he writes, "his retinue of gallant knights and noble youths, his horses of price, his vessels of gold or of silver gilt, the splendid array of his plate, the gorgeousness of his servitors, the fine linen and purple robes, and I thought within myself that nothing could be more blissful. When, moreover, all the world, even those who had learnt in the schools the emptiness of such things, were obsequious to him, and he was looked up to as the father and lord of all, it was no wonder that he valued highly his worldly advantages. If at that time any one had told me that this splendour which we all admired ought to be held in contempt, with what face, in what temper, should I have heard it? I should have thought him more insensate than Orestes, more querulous than Thersites. It appeared to me that nothing could exceed happiness so exalted. But when I became a man, and heard the scurrilous language which was addressed to him, I felt that I should have fainted if it had been used to me, who had nothing, in such a presence. Then I began to value less what I had before so highly esteemed."

Henry appears to have remained in the bishop's household till he reached manhood, and, it is said, received from him, as his first preferment, a canonry at Lincoln. He speaks, in one place, of a certain

Albinus of Anjou as his "master," who, we may presume, directed his studies in the bishop's household. It is, probably, the same person whom he mentions again as "Aldwine, my own master, who was Abbot of Ramsey." During those years he composed several books of epigrams, satires, sacred hymns, and love poems, which he afterwards published with his more important works. His own talents, aided, perhaps, by the regard felt for his father's memory, marked him out for early promotion ; for he could not have been much over thirty years old when he received the archdeaconry.

He continued in equal favour with Alexander de Blois, the successor of Bishop Bloet in the see of Lincoln, at whose request he undertook his *History of the English*, and to whom he dedicated the work. The extraordinary liberality of this prelate, when he twice visited Rome, gained for him there the title of "the Magnificent." Henry is said to have visited Rome in his company, and Mr. Forester, to whose biographical preface to Henry of Huntingdon we are indebted for the substance of these remarks, thinks he probably did so on both the occasions when Bishop Alexander went thither. These were in the years 1125 and 1144. On the other hand, Sir Thomas Hardy finds that he accompanied Archbishop Theobald, of Canterbury, to Rome, in 1139, and on his way thither visited Bec, in Normandy, where he first saw in the monastery the *British History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, of which work he made an abridgment, and dedicated it to his

friend Warin. We shall have something to say of this famous work hereafter.

Mr. Forester considers that Henry of Huntingdon's *History of the English* was probably commenced after Bishop Alexander's return from his first journey. The first edition only came down to the death of Henry I., before which time the book really contains very little original matter. Thirteen years later he continued it to the thirteenth year of Stephen's reign ; and after the death of Stephen he added another continuation to the accession of Henry II. By that time he was probably about seventy years old, and it may be presumed that he did not live much longer ; for one manuscript of the history ends, just after the death of Stephen, with the words, "The accession of a new king demands a new book ;" but no further continuation, relating to the reign of Henry II., is known to exist.

Among the passages in Huntingdon's account of Stephen's reign, which are specially valuable, may be noticed his description of the battle of the Standard, the details of which are not given so fully by any other strictly contemporary writer. But perhaps some of the more minute touches will give a better notion of the interest of this very impartial critic's remarks on the events of his own time. The age, apparently, was beginning to despise a number of superstitions, and our author rather commends "the great resolution of King Stephen," who wore his crown at Lincoln during the season

of Christmas. Although William the Conqueror had done so at Gloucester, there seems to have been some kind of prejudice against a king appearing crowned at that particular time of year; but Stephen was determined to show that he despised the feeling, whatever it may have been, that to do so was either irreverent or unlucky. At the same time, our author relates, as facts, certain omens which occurred to King Stephen just before the battle of Lincoln ; but as they appear to have been reported to him by his friend, Bishop Alexander, who was present on the occasion, I think there is no good reason to doubt that they did take place as related. It was the morning of Candlemas Day, and Stephen heard mass with great devotion, but sorely troubled in mind, and anxious about the issue of the impending conflict. As he offered the usual mass taper to the bishop, "it broke, betokening the rupture of the kings. The pix also, which contained Christ's body, snapped its fastening, and fell on the altar while the bishop was celebrating—a sign of the king's fall from power." The former incident is confirmed by the independent authority of the writer of the *Gesta Stephani*, and both occurrences are natural enough results of the great anxiety and trepidation which must have possessed both king and bishop.

As contemporary historians, the writers of whom we have just been speaking are the most interesting of the age to which they belonged. In them we meet with close and minute descriptions of what

was taking place at the very time they wrote. A much more voluminous historian was Ordericus Vitalis, who wrote an elaborate work on the history of Normandy and England, preceded by a general history of Christendom, from the time of our Lord to his own day. The order of this work, however, is rather confused, the thirteen books, of which it is composed, having been written at different times, and not even consecutively, as they now stand. Moreover, though an Englishman born, and an ardent lover of his native land, he was sent abroad in boyhood by his father, and spent the greater part of his life in the Abbey of Ouche, in Normandy, where he received his education. He must, however, have devoted a large part of his life to historical investigation, and he paid several visits to England for the purpose of collecting historical materials. Still, his account of English affairs is, on the whole, subordinate to the history of Normandy, and especially to ecclesiastical history, which was his main object. Nevertheless, his work is remarkably full of interest, as regards both countries, and space alone forbids us to do it justice. We must, therefore, content ourselves with saying that the narrative is throughout wonderfully clear and vivid, and is, perhaps, not the less interesting for being a little discursive in style. The portraits drawn of William the Conqueror, and of his sons, are also wonderfully lifelike. Particularly striking is what he says of that extraordinary character, Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy—a very

Esau for improvidence, who first sold a large part of his birthright to his younger brother, and then lost the remainder by utter carelessness and shameful maladministration. It seems this strange prodigal, even when nominally reigning over Normandy, so wasted his means that he absolutely sometimes lay in bed till midday for want of clothes, of which he was robbed by the profligate associates he gathered round him.

It is, doubtless, a great defect in this work that so little attention is paid by the author to chronology, or, indeed, to order, or systematic arrangement of any kind. The work seems to have grown upon the author while he was writing, and with new information he reverted to an old subject without caring to digest what he had already written into a better order. But if such a mode of treatment destroys to a great extent the claim of Ordericus to be considered a systematic historian, he is, perhaps, even the more attractive from the very fact that he has not bestowed too much thought on the art with which he tells his story. A chapter is even cut short in consequence of the physical discomfort under which the author laboured when he was writing it, and the further treatment of the subject is postponed to another day. Thus, after a brief account of the disputes between Robert of Normandy and his brothers, William Rufus and Henry, he writes as follows :—

“ The calamities which threaten the sons of earth are endless, and if they were all carefully committed to writing would

fill large volumes. It is now winter, and I am suffering from the severity of the cold, and propose to allow myself some respite for other occupations, and, fatigued with my work, shall here bring the present book to a close. When the returning spring brings with it serener skies I will resume in the sequel my narrative of matters which I have hitherto treated cursorily, or which still remain to be told, and, by God's help, employ my faithful pen in elucidating the causes of peace and war among my countrymen."





CHAPTER III.

NEW MONASTIC ORDERS—THE CRUSADES.

Religious revival in Europe—New orders of monks practising austerity—The Cluniacs—Carthusians—Cistercians—St. Bernard—His love of nature—Richard of Devizes—Massacre of the Jews at Richard I.'s coronation—Alleged crucifixion of a boy by the Jews of Winchester—Crusade of Richard I., and state of the kingdom in his absence—Expulsion of the monks of Coventry by Bishop Hugh de Nonant—Joceline of Brakelond's account of the monastery of St. Edmundsbury under Abbot Sampson—Description of the abbot—Disputes between the monastery and the burgesses—Privileges claimed against the archbishop—Abbot Sampson's journey to Rome—He holds his own against the king—Customs and privileges of the monastery—Dispute with the monks of Ely.

IF English monasticism, as we have seen, derived from the first a very great impulse from the Norman Conquest, it was not long before new influences carried over from the continent came to increase and continue the movement. The same religious zeal which in one form aroused all Europe and called the martial spirits of the age to rescue Jerusalem from the hands of Pagans spoke less obtrusively to many a quiet soul urging him to a not less arduous warfare, whose aim was to subdue

the flesh by fasting and prayer in the company of brethren endowed with a kindred zeal.

The monasteries of England in early times do not appear to have been placed under any common rule or order. It is probable that their discipline was most effective in the north, where monasticism, planted originally by Irish and Scottish missionaries, had been almost the only means of disseminating Christianity. In the south there was a strong tendency to convert monastic settlements into colleges of secular clergy. St. Dunstan introduced the rule of St. Benedict, with modifications adapted to the English climate and mode of life ; but his work was very nearly overthrown even during his own lifetime. The Benedictine rule, however, was finally established, and the Normans at their coming found it universally acknowledged. A new rule, however, does not of itself beget the zeal to promote its own observance ; and discipline had greatly relaxed before the conquest, when Lanfranc found it necessary to institute another reformation.

But now there rose up on the continent of Europe new forms of religious life, which, after a time found their way into England also. New orders, all framed in the same spirit, invited men to a life of labour and austerity, more truly in accordance, as it was supposed, with the original design of St. Benedict ; and monasteries began to spring up, bearing such names as Cluniac, Cistercian, Carthusian, and the like, indicative of the different forms of this religious revival.

It was far from true, however, that the sentiment which gave birth to these new institutions was that of the founder of the Benedictine rule. St. Benedict intended his followers to labour hard, but not to subject their bodies to an unnatural strain. He allowed his monks a plentiful diet, restricted only in quality and in the amount of animal food, with a large discretion to the head of every monastery to allow special indulgences even in that. He prescribed no distinctive clothing, but left the vestments to be regulated by the abbot according to the climate and the custom of the country. Not so the new orders which now began to be promulgated. Scanty meals, long hours of labour, and a strict rule of dress were essential features of their institution.

Of all these movements France (or at least the region that we call France nowadays) was the common parent. A warm but not relaxing climate enabled zealous reformers to institute austerities till then unknown and not easily to be maintained in other regions. And France was assuredly in this age the religious centre of Christendom. In it was held the great council that first summoned Europe to arms against the infidels, and no less than four of the French kings were engaged personally in the Crusades. Whatever movement stirred the thoughts of men in matters of religion, whether it tended to heresy as in the case of the Albigenses, or to new forms of observance in connection with the Church Catholic, was sure at this time to take its rise in France.

The oldest of these orders was the Cluniac, which began in Burgundy in the beginning of the tenth century, but was not introduced into England till eleven years after the Conquest. It arose simply from the efforts of successive Abbots of Clugny to correct what was thought remiss in the keeping of St. Benedict's rule. But as regards England this order is of comparatively little importance. The number of priories and cells in connection with it was ultimately twenty-seven ; but they were all subject to foreign houses, they had more French than English inmates, their priors were elected by foreigners, and almost every point in their government was submitted to the decision of the foreign abbots, who likewise were their visitors.

The Carthusians, though they had even fewer houses in England, were of somewhat greater consequence. Instituted about the year 1080, they were first introduced into this country exactly a century later. St. Bruno, their founder, had chosen an abode for them at the Grande Chartreuse, in Dauphiné, an almost inaccessible spot, high up among the mountains, surrounded by cataracts, and fearful precipices, now covered with thick forests. In this truly awful seclusion their severely self-denying rule forbade them even to eat flesh at all, and compelled them to fast once a week on bread, water, and salt, for a whole day. They wore a hair shirt next the skin, and were only once a week indulged in a walk round the grounds of the monastery ; for beyond the precincts of his own house

no monk of this order was ever permitted to go, except only the prior or proctor of the monastery, and even these only on the necessary affairs of the house itself.

The monks of this order wore a white habit covered by a black cloak. Only nine Carthusian houses were ever erected in England, the most famous of which—the well-known Charterhouse of London—was not founded till the end of Edward the Third's reign. The English name Charterhouse was a corruption of the French Chartreuse, and was applied to all the monasteries of this order.

A more important, and far more numerous order was that of the Cistercians, or White Monks, so called from the white cassocks which they habitually wore, in marked opposition to the black habits of the older orders. The parent house of this order was at Cistertium or Citeaux in Burgundy, founded in 1098, by one Robert, formerly abbot of Molême. But the order attained its fullest development under St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux. This wonderful enthusiast, when only twenty-two years old, had knocked for admittance at the door of Citeaux monastery, along with some thirty companions, whom the power of his preaching had induced to seek a religious life. The attractions of Citeaux at that time, were, that the monks ate but one meal a day, and that only twelve hours after rising from their hard beds ; that they worked hard in the fields, yet never tasted animal food, not even fish, grease, or eggs ; and that milk was

allowed them only as an occasional luxury. In this hard warfare with the flesh they had at first been cheered by the favour of the great. Two dukes of Burgundy had successively patronized them, and attended their services on great festivals. But the abbot who now reigned—an Englishman, by name Stephen Harding—considering the visits of great men with their retinues as a discouragement to devotion, had made it known that he declined to receive them in future; so the monks were left to practice their austerities unregarded by the world, except so far as a similar spirit could prompt men like St. Bernard and his friends to seek them out.

And truly, but for this accession of new zeal the little community stood in danger of gradually perishing off the face of the earth; for the abbot had taken what, humanly speaking, might be considered the best means to repel new-comers. St. Bernard, however, was a fountain of enthusiasm in himself. So earnestly had he preached, even before coming to Citeaux, the advantages of a monastic life, that wives and mothers had much ado to prevent their families being broken up by the influence of the young man's eloquence. And now, having taken up his abode within that monastery with thirty other novices, the fame of the place spread so rapidly, and so many applicants for admission followed his example, that Citeaux could not contain them all. Two detachments had to be sent off successively under the guidance of

older monks to found new monasteries elsewhere ; and only two years after St. Bernard's arrival the formation of a third colony had become absolutely necessary. Abbot Stephen found no one so fit to take the rule of this new community as this young man of twenty-four ; and Bernard was sent with twelve associates to found another monastery in the valley of Clairvaux, not far from Chaumont. There in the midst of dense and lonely woods the little fellowship built with their own hands a rude fabric, preserved for centuries after by the veneration of St. Bernard's followers, in the state in which he left it. It consisted of a chapel, dormitory, and refectory, all under a single roof, the dormitory being, in fact, a loft, reached by a ladder, over the refectory. There was no floor but the bare earth ; the windows were scarcely broader than a man's hand ; the abbot's cell, at the top of the attic, was a chamber in which no one could even sit upright.

To St. Bernard self-denial was a luxury ; and it was certainly owing to the example of his energy and fervour that the order soon attained its world-wide popularity. In 1129 the first Cistercian house in this country was established at Waverley, in Surrey. Two years later Tintern was founded on the Wye, in Monmouthshire ; and in a very few years after, Rievalle, Furness, Kirkstall, Fountains, and a large number of others. The number of houses of this order in England ultimately reached one hundred and one. Their remains exist at this day, the most interesting and the most beautiful

of all monastic ruins. It is not merely the grace and lightness of the architecture that distinguish their roofless fabrics above all others. The situation and scenery around are generally more attractive. Who is not lost in wonder at the loveliness of Tintern in the midst of its charming valley, its unglazed windows serving as framework to the most exquisite of natural pictures? Who has not felt the fascination of Melrose to be enhanced by the beauties of the Tweed? The very names of Furness, Kirkstall, Fountains, recall images of natural scenery no less than of romantic ruins. Rarely, indeed, does any one visit a Cistercian abbey without being struck by the situation and surroundings, as well as by the picturesque remains themselves.

Nor is this a mere accident of fate. The love of nature was strong in St. Bernard, and he communicated it to his followers. "Believe me," he said to one of his pupils in a passage which Shakespeare may almost be thought to have had in his mind at one time, "you will find something far greater in the woods than you will in books. Stones and trees will teach you that which you will never learn from masters. Think you not you can suck honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock? Do not the mountains drop sweetness, the hills run with milk and honey, and the valleys stand thick with corn?" By this teaching the Cistercians were encouraged to take up their abodes in solitary places far away from the haunts

of men. The old Benedictine monasteries had generally been built just outside the walls of towns, or had gathered towns about them; but the Cistercians were dependent on grants of land in remote districts where human labour had not yet developed the resources of the soil. To this day, the vicinity of a Cistercian monastery is generally somewhat secluded, though rich and beautiful with a cultivation which the monks were the first to introduce.

The love of nature in St. Bernard was not combined with a love of art or literature. Against these things he rather set his face, as out of keeping with the work his followers had to do. The magnificent fabrics of the order all belong to the succeeding age, when prosperity had brought with it tastes and sentiments rather at variance with those in which the order originated. The main object which it was sought to enforce was purity. All their monasteries were dedicated to the Virgin Mary. No meretricious ornaments, no rich paintings, or stained glass, or sculptures were to allure the eye. Nor was it desirable to form extensive libraries; the work of the Cistercians was not to be in the cloister or the scriptorium, but in the fields.

Early in their history, however, their popularity began to decline. Slenderly endowed at first with lands which had not yet been turned to good account, it was only by the exercise of the strictest parsimony that they could live and keep

up hospitality. This made them a little more eager than was becoming in soliciting new endowments. "None were more greedy," says Mr. Brewer, "in adding farm to farm; none less scrupulous in obtaining grants of land from wealthy patrons; and, what was far worse, in appropriating the tithes and endowments of parish churches, and pulling down the sacred edifices to suit their own interests." It was in vain that they attempted to justify acts like these by a hospitality to strangers, which contrasted strangely with their own abstemious life. The greed of the Cistercians became a byword; and as various causes besides contributed to a relaxation of discipline, they became the mark of bitter satire.

These were the principal orders of monks. But it was not only monks, in the proper sense of the word, that began at this time to adopt new rules of life. The monks were laymen; but the clergy also began to form themselves into orders, and to live together in monasteries. Even the men of war had their military orders, and formed communities by themselves after the manner of the monks. It is not necessary, however, to do more than mention the names of the Augustinian and Premonstratensian Canons, as examples of the former class; and of the two great military orders, the Knights Templars and the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, otherwise called the Knights Hospitallers. These latter of course originated in the days of the Crusades. The Augustinian Canons were

sounded just before, but even they did not come to England till the reign of Henry I.

Thus it will be seen that for more than a century after the Conquest the religious life of Europe and of England was continually seeking new forms of manifestation. The fact has left its mark upon the literature of the time, but perhaps indirectly quite as much as otherwise. For the new orders generally were not literary, certainly not so much so, on the whole, as their predecessors, the Benedictines. The great monasteries of St. Alban's, Durham, and Croyland, long after the rise of these new orders, had their separate schools of historians ; nor was William of Malmesbury without successors, although anonymous ones, in his own house. No such continuous writing of history is found to have occupied the inmates of smaller and more modern establishments. The very severities they practised —among other things the revival of the old monastic rule of daily manual labour in the fields—were unfavourable to literary activity. The old monasteries, too, remained the great centres of intelligence, and had better opportunities of collecting information, in the first instance, than the men who occupied Cistercian or Carthusian cells. Nevertheless, even the Cistercians made some contributions to historical literature ; and the very interesting chronicle of Richard of Devizes, though not actually the work of a Carthusian, may almost be considered as an offspring of Carthusian zeal.

This writer was, as a matter of fact, only a monk

of the old cathedral priory of St. Swithin's, Winchester, which, like other foundations of the same kind, was of the Benedictine Order. But Robert, prior of St. Swithin's, had caught the enthusiasm of the times, and, giving up his priory at Winchester, had joined himself to the newly established Charterhouse at Witham, in Somersetshire. It was but ten years since this, the parent house of the Carthusian order in England, had been founded by virtue of a grant from Henry II., and great was the anxiety of religious persons to be assured of the success of the experiment. After the retirement of Prior Robert from Winchester, three monks of his old monastery went to visit him at Witham; and among the three was Richard of Devizes. The visit inspired him with an ardent wish to join the new community himself, and having arrived at Witham, he would have stayed there but for the persuasions of his two brother monks, who insisted on his return. "I came," he said, "and oh that I had come alone! I went thither, making the third, and those that were with me were the cause of my return. My desire displeased them, and they caused my fervour, I will not say my error, to grow cold. I saw in your establishment that which I had not believed, and I could not sufficiently admire. In each of your cells there is one door, according to rule, which you are permitted to open at pleasure; but to go out by it is not permitted, except so much as that one foot should always remain in the cell within the thres-

hold. A brother may step out with one foot, whichever he pleases, so long as the other remains in the cell. A great and solemn oath is to be taken that the doors should be kept open, by which it is not permitted to enter or depart."

These words are addressed by our author to his former prior in dedicating to him a history of the reign of Richard I., undertaken in obedience to his request. For though Prior Robert had withdrawn more completely from the world, he still had his eye upon it, and took the strongest possible interest in what was doing in it. Indeed, this fact seems to have struck Richard of Devizes as not a little noteworthy, both in him and in the brethren at Witham generally. "I cannot but admire," he observes, "that living to yourselves apart out of society, and singly, you understand all the great things achieved in the world as they happen, and even sometimes you know them prior to their being accomplished." But who could be so utter a recluse as to fail to take an interest in the events of Cœur de Lion's reign? Even at home there was a great revolution, "turning squares into circles," as our author expresses it; while abroad there was the brilliant expedition of the crusading king, rich in actions, which have all the charms of romance even to the present day.

Richard of Devizes seems to have been asked by his old prior to include in his history some account of the family troubles of King Henry II., and the dissensions between him and his sons; but

he preferred to leave these great subjects to other pens. "My narrative," he says, "serves only for the living." He accordingly begins it with the Coronation of Richard I. at Westminster. The very first paragraph, which is painfully characteristic of the spirit of the times, is perhaps the least agreeable to read in the whole work :—

" Now, in the year of our Lord's Incarnation, 1189, Richard, the son of King Henry II., by Eleanor, brother of Henry III.,* was consecrated king of the English by Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, at Westminster, on the third of the runes of September (3 Sept.). On the very day of the coronation, about that solemn hour in which the Son was immolated to the Father, they began, in the city of London, to immolate the Jews to their father, the devil, and so long was the duration of this famous mystery that the holocaust could scarcely be completed on the second day. The other cities and towns of the kingdom emulated the faith of the Londoners, and with a like devotion despatched their blood-suckers with blood to hell. Something, although unequally, was at that time prepared against these abandoned ones everywhere throughout the realm. Winchester alone spared its vermin. The people there are prudent and circumspect, and the city, always acting mildly, has never done anything over speedily; fearing nothing more than to repent, it weighs the issue of things before the commencement. Being unprepared, it was unwilling at its own peril to cast up violently through the parts the indigestion by which it was oppressed, and it was careful for its own bowels, in the mean time modestly concealing its uneasiness, until it may be possible, at a convenient time for cure, to cast out the whole cause of the disease at once, and once for all."

* Henry, the eldest son of Henry II., who died before his father, having been crowned as king during his father's lifetime, is frequently styled Henry III. in the early chronicles.

That a Christian monk, anxious to find a rule of life which should most effectually separate him from the wickedness of the world, could have permitted himself to write in such a fashion of a wholesale massacre of the Jews, is a fact full of shame and sorrow to all real lovers of religion. But as even the most devoted of our Lord's first followers "knew not what spirit they were of," when they thought themselves most zealous, so we must expect to find it will be to the end of time. One age may be more violent; another, born under happier influences, may be more gentle; but as times of trial arise there will be a continual danger even among the most devout, of mistaking the spirit of persecution for true devotion to the Cross. In the present case it is not altogether difficult to understand the popular indignation. The Jews, as it would appear from the statements of other authorities, had been a little too obtrusive at the time of the coronation. And what had the enemies of the faith to do with such a solemnity? Here was a king sworn before coming to the crown to take up arms against the infidels of the East—a glorious and unheard-of example; and the infidels within his own kingdom dared to press into his presence, even at the sacred rite of inauguration. They too, who, with their extortions had been turning the holy cause to their own account in filthy lucre—who had been lending money at enormous interest to those who wanted it to equip them for the Holy Land. How could any one bespeak mercy for such caitiffs?

Richard of Devizes, at least, could not. It is more than doubtful whether he admires what he calls the prudence and foresight of his own city, of Winchester, in never joining in these outbursts of popular fury. Elsewhere he tells us that the Winchester Jews rewarded the clemency of the inhabitants by murdering a boy there. The story will strike the ordinary reader as a mare's nest ; but there is much in the way in which it is told well worthy of observation, and some incidental description of localities in England which is exceedingly curious.

It was a common opinion, at this time, that the Jews occasionally crucified Christian children ; and of course this belief lent additional vehemence to the persecution which from time to time was directed against them. It was well for this unfortunate race that however little sympathy they met with from any class of Christians, they at least had made themselves useful to the rulers of the world, and casually received some slight degree of protection in consequence. It is curious that our author, after describing the great massacre of the Jews at Richard's coronation, goes on to relate two or three trivial accidents that occurred the same day as so ominous of misfortune during the reign, that men could only speak of them with bated breath. The massacre itself, it would seem, led to no such sinister forebodings.

Neither was any cause of apprehension discovered in Richard's abandonment of his own kingdom,

and of his duties as king, for an object of quite a different character. The fact, on the contrary, seemed in the highest degree commendable. "A king," says this writer, "worthy of the name of king, who, in the first year of his reign, left the kingdom of England for Christ, scarcely otherwise than if he had departed never to return. So great was the devotion of the man, so hastily, so quickly, and so speedily did he run, yea fly, to avenge the wrongs of Christ!" Richard, however, took some pains, though more for the sake of his expedition than of his subjects, to leave matters in a satisfactory condition at his departure. Having received power from the Pope to withdraw the cross from any of his subjects who had taken the vow, whom he might find necessary for the government of his kingdom, he appointed Hugh de Pusac or Pudsey, bishop of Durham, chief justice of the whole kingdom, and obtained from him ten thousand pounds of silver as the price of his creation as earl of Northumberland. It was the jest of the day, this making a young earl, as it was said, out of an old bishop, to the king's profit. Sheriffs were deprived of their offices on being accused of any malversation, and were glad to compound for pardon by enormous gifts. Whoever found his money a burden to him was relieved with the greatest possible facility; and when an old acquaintance rallied the king on his mode of raising supplies, he replied, "I would sell London if I could find a chapman."

However little devotion this shows to the interests

of his kingdom, the king was undoubtedly politic as regards the actual object that he had in view. He was equally wise in his selection of the man who was to bear the chief responsibility of affairs at home in his absence. William de Longchamp, whom he himself had appointed bishop of Ely, was his chancellor, and was indeed a faithful servant. But his devotion to his master's interests did not help to make him popular; and notwithstanding our author's great admiration of the king, he gives his minister a very unpleasant character:—

“ William, bishop of Ely, the king's chancellor, by nature a second Jacob, although he did not wrestle with the angel, a goodly person, making up in mind for his shortness in stature, secure for his master's love, and presuming on his favour because all power was, is, and will be, impatient of a partner, expelled Hugh de Pusac from the Exchequer, and scarcely leaving him even his sword with which he had been invested as a knight by the king's hand, after a short time deprived him of the honour of his earldom also. And lest the bishop of Durham alone should bewail his misfortunes, the villain, who was now more cruel than any wild beast, and spared nobody, fell like a pest upon the bishop of Winchester also. The custody of the castles and county is taken away from him, nor is he even permitted to enjoy his own patrimony. The kingdom is disturbed, and the discontented are charged with disaffection to the king. Everybody crosses the sea to importune the king against the tyrant; but he having crossed first of all, briefly related before the king a partial account of his entire proceeding and expulsion; by whom also he was fully instructed in all things to be done. He thus foiled the adverse wishes of his rivals, and was on his return before those who assailed him could obtain admission to the king's presence. So he returns to the English not less

powerful and prosperous than one who has accomplished all things whatsoever he desired."

Nevertheless, his rival, the bishop of Durham, was for some time under a belief that the king had given him a commission which would enable him to maintain his authority as justiciar. The result was a collision, which Richard of Devizes goes on to describe with some of his favourite classical allusions and quotations:—

"The bishop of Durham in haste proceeded direct to London, but not being received by the barons of the exchequer, he hastily, as if sure to triumph, pursues his way after the chancellor, who at that time had gone on an expedition towards Lincoln; whom, having overtaken, he saluted in the king's name, not frankly nor without a frown, and then questioned him with austerity concerning the affairs of state, as if it were not lawful to do anything without his consent. He put aside fine language and long words; and while he gloried too much in power not yet received, not understanding with whom he was speaking, he poured out whatever he ought to have kept secret. At the conclusion of his address, the staff is put forth to silence talk, the king's solemn act much to be reverenced is exhibited for recital. The mountains travail, the silly mouse is born. The observance of strict silence is enjoined during the king's mandate; all were hushed and held their faces attentive. An epistle is read in public, which would have been much more to be feared if it had not been read so soon; the other, well able to conceal his device, shrewdly deferred to answer what he had heard till the seventh day, arranging a place of conference at Tickhill. On the day appointed the bishop of Durham comes to the castle, and his attendants being commanded to wait for him before the gates, he goes in to the chancellor quite alone; he who before had held his peace speaks first, and compels

the deceived one to recite with his own mouth letters he had obtained after the former against whatever he had hoped. As he was preparing to answer, he added, 'The other day, while you were speaking it was time for me to be silent ; now, that you may discern why I have taken a time for speaking, you being silent, as my lord the king lives, you shall not depart hence until you have given me hostages for all the castles which you hold being delivered up to me, for I do not take you as a bishop a bishop, but as a chancellor a chancellor !' The ensnared had neither the firmness nor the opportunity to resist ; the hostages are given, and at the term assigned the castles are given up for the restoring of the hostages."

Shortly afterwards, Richard of Devizes tells us of the struggle William de Longchamp had to maintain King Richard's authority in his absence against his rebellious brother John. But meanwhile the reader's attention is occupied by an interesting description of the equipment of the king's fleet, and of its union with that of the French king at Messina :—

" The ships which the king found already prepared on the shore were one hundred in number, and fourteen busses, vessels of very great magnitude and admirable swiftness, strong vessels and very sound, whereof this was the equipage and appointment. The first of the ships had three spare rudders, thirteen anchors, thirty oars, two sails, three sets of ropes of all kinds, and besides these double whatever a ship can want, except the mast and the ship's boat. There is appointed to the ship's command a most experienced steersman, and fourteen subordinate attendants picked for the service are assigned him. The ship is freighted with forty horses of value, trained to arms, and with arms of all kinds for as many horsemen, and forty foot, and fifteen sailors,

and with an entire year's provisions for as many men and horses. There was one appointment for all the ships, but each of the busses received a double appointment and freight. The king's treasure, which was very great and inestimable, was divided amongst the ships and busses, that if one part should experience danger, the rest might be saved. All things being thus arranged, the king himself, with a small household, and the chief men of his army, with his attendants, having quitted the shore, advanced before the fleet in galleys, and being daily entertained by maritime towns, taking along with them the larger ships and busses of that sea, arrived prosperously at Messina. So great was the splendour of the approaching armament, such the clashing and brilliancy of their arms, so noble the sound of the trumpets and clarions, that the city quaked and was greatly astounded, and there came to meet the king a multitude of all ages, people without number, wondering and proclaiming with what exceeding glory and magnificence that king had arrived, surpassing the King of France, who, with his forces, had arrived seven days before. And forasmuch as the King of France had been already received into the palace of Tancred, King of Sicily, within the walls, the King of England pitched his camp without the city. The same day, the King of France, knowing of the arrival of his comrade and brother, flies to his reception ; nor could their gestures sufficiently express in embraces and kisses how much each of them rejoiced in the other. The armies cheered one another with mutual applause and intercourse, as if so many thousand men had been all of one heart and one mind. In such pastimes is the holiday spent until the evening, and the weary kings departing, although not satiated, return every one to his own quarters."

For all this, however, the difference in character between the two kings, which made real co-operation impossible, displayed itself almost immediately. As our author continues :—

“On the next day, the King of England presently caused gibbets to be erected without the camp to hang thereon thieves and robbers. The judges delegated spared neither sex nor age ; the cause of the stranger and the native found the like law and the like punishment. The King of France, whatever transgression his people committed, or whatever offence was committed against them, took no notice and held his peace ; the King of England esteeming the country of those implicated in guilt as a matter of no consequence, considered every man his own, and left no transgression unpunished ; wherefore the one was called a Lamb by the Griffones, the other obtained the name of a Lion.”

The Griffones, as they were called, a mongrel race of Greeks and Saracens, the most powerful and warlike people of that region, were particularly troublesome. They favoured the French, but continually broke faith with the English, and harassed them, till Philip himself, who had been endeavouring to arrange terms of amity, came to the tent of the King of England to bear witness that he held him blameless in taking up arms to punish them. Richard accordingly proceeded to attack the city of Messina :—

“The terrible standard of the dragon is borne in front unsurled, while behind the king the sound of the trumpet excites the army. The sun shone brightly on the golden shields, and the mountains were resplendent in their glare ; they marched cautiously and orderly, and the affair was managed without show. The Griffones, on the contrary, the city gates being closed, stood armed at the battlements of the walls and towers, as yet fearing nothing, and incessantly discharged their darts upon the enemy. The king, acquainted with nothing better than to take cities by storm and batter

forts, let their quivers be emptied first, and then at length made his first assault by his archers who preceded the army. The sky is hidden by the shower of arrows, a thousand darts pierce through the shields spread abroad on the ramparts ; nothing could save the rebels against the force of the darts. The walls are left without guard, because no one could look out of doors but he would have an arrow in his eye before he could shut it. In the mean time the king, with his troops, without repulse, freely, and as though with permission, approached the gates of the city, which, with the application of the battering-ram, he forced in an instant, and, having led in his army, took every hold in the city, even to Tancred's palace and the lodgings of the French around their king's quarters, which he spared in respect of the king, his lord. The standards of the victors are planted on the towers through the whole circuit of the city, and each of the surrendered fortifications he entrusted to particular captains of his army, and caused his nobles to take up their quarters in the city."

This author passes lightly over, or rather omits to mention, the quarrels which arose between Richard and Philip, and the breaking off of Richard's engagement to marry the French king's sister. He also expresses himself rather mysteriously about Richard's engagement with Berengaria of Navarre, and the journey undertaken by his mother, Queen Eleanor, to conduct the young lady to him in Sicily :—

“ Queen Eleanor, a matchless woman, beautiful and chaste, powerful and modest, meek and eloquent, which is rarely wont to be met with in a woman who was advanced in years enough to have had two husbands and two sons crowned kings, still indefatigable for every undertaking, whose power was the admiration of her age, having taken with her the

daughter of the King of the Navarrese, a maid more accomplished than beautiful, followed the king, her son, and having overtaken him still abiding in Sicily, she came to Pisa, a city full of every good, and convenient for her reception, there to await the king's pleasure, together with the King of Navarre's ambassadors and the damsel. Many knew what I wish that none of us had known. The same queen, in the time of her former husband, Louis VII. of France, went to Jerusalem. Let none speak more thereof. I also know well. Be silent."

Some of the further adventures which befel the expedition before it reached the Holy Land have an additional interest nowadays on account of the island which was the scene of them.

"The fleet of Richard, King of the English, put out to sea, and proceeded in this order. In the forefront went three ships only, in one of which was the Queen of Sicily and the young damsel of Navarre, probably still a virgin; in the other two, a certain part of the king's treasure and arms; in each of the three marines and provisions. In the second line there were, what with ships, and busses, and men-of-war, thirteen; in the third, fourteen; in the fourth, twenty; in the fifth, thirty; in the sixth, forty; in the seventh, sixty; in the last, the king himself, followed with his galleys. There was between the ships, and between their lines, a certain space left by the sailors at such interval, that from one line to another the sound of the trumpet, from one ship to another the human voice, could be heard. This also was admirable, that the king was no less cheerful and healthy, strong and mighty, light and gay, at sea, than he was wont to be by land. I conclude, therefore, that there was not one man more powerful than he in the world, either by land or sea.

"Now, as the ships were proceeding in the aforesaid manner and order, some being before others, two of the three first, driven by the violence of the winds, were broken on the

rocks near the port of Cyprus ; the third, which was English, more speedy than they, having turned back into the deep, escaped the peril. Almost all the men of both ships got away alive to land, many of whom the hostile Cypriotes slew, some they took captive, some taking refuge in a certain church, were besieged. Whatever also in the ships was cast up by the sea, fell a prey to the Cypriotes. The prince also of that island coming up, received for his share the gold and the arms ; and he caused the shore to be guarded by all the armed force he could summon together, that he might not permit the fleet which followed to approach, lest the king should take again what had been thus stolen from him. Above the port was a strong city, and, upon a natural rock, a high fortified castle. The whole of that nation was warlike, and accustomed to live by theft. They placed beams and planks at the entrance of the port, across the passage, the gates, and entrances ; and the whole land, with one mind, prepared themselves for a conflict against the English. God so willed that the cursed people should receive the reward of their evil deeds by the hands of one who would not spare. The third English ship, in which were the women, having cast out its anchors, rode out at sea, and watched all things from opposite, to report the misfortune to the king, lest haply, being ignorant of the loss and disgrace, he should pass the place unrevenged. The next line of the king's ships came up after the other, and they all stopped at the first. A full report reached the king, who, sending heralds to the lord of the island, and obtaining no satisfaction, commanded his entire army to arm, from the first even to the last, and to get out of the great ships into the galleys and boats, and follow him to the shore. What he commanded was immediately performed ; they came in arms to the port. The king being armed, leaped first from his galley, and gave the first blow in the war ; but before he was able to strike a second, he had three thousand of his followers with him striking away by his side. All the timber that had been placed as a barricade in the port was cast down instantly,

and the brave fellows went up into the city as ferocious as lionesses are wont to be when robbed of their young. The fight was carried on manfully against them, numbers fell wounded on both sides, and the swords of both parties were made drunk with blood. The Cypriotes are vanquished, the city is taken, with the castle besides ; whatever the victors choose is ransacked, and the lord of the island is himself taken and brought to the king. He being taken, supplicates and obtains pardon ; he offers homage to the king, and it is received ; and he swears, though unasked, that henceforth he will hold the island of him as his liege lord, and will open all the castles of the land to him ; make satisfaction for the damage already done ; and further, bring presents of his own. On being dismissed after the oath, he is commanded to fulfil the conditions in the morning."

Instead of doing so, however, the king of Cyprus was found next day to have escaped. Richard is joined at the same time by the king of Jerusalem, who came to the island to salute him ; and the two kings combine to pursue the fugitive, the one by land and the other by water. Their forces reassembled before a city in which he had taken refuge, and a sharp battle is fought, in which the English would have been beaten if they had been under any other general but king Richard. They gain, however, a dear-bought victory, and pursue the king of the island to a third castle, where he surrenders on condition that he should not be put in irons. Having learnt, apparently, some degree of duplicity from his adversary, King Richard consents, and causes shackles of silver to be made for him. He then traverses the whole island, takes all its castles, and appoints constables of his own

to keep them ; assigning also sheriffs and justices for the whole island, just as in England. He afterwards sails to the siege of Acre, capturing on his way a very large merchant ship destined by Saladin for the relief of the besieged. His arrival at Acre, we are told, "was welcomed by the besiegers with as great joy as if it had been Christ that had come again on earth to restore the kingdom of Israel." The French king had got there before him, but his lustre paled on Richard's arrival like that of the moon before the rising sun.

Richard had brought with him from Sicily the materials of a wooden fortress which he had set up at Messina to overawe the Griffones. It was now set up at Acre, and from its height men overlooked the city. Archers were set upon it, who shot their missiles at the Turks and Thracians, while engines cast stones, and battering rams assailed the walls, of which sappers also undermined the foundations. The soldiers, at the same time protected by their shields, planted scaling ladders and sought an entrance over the ramparts. "The king himself ran up and down through the ranks, directing some, reproving some, and urging others, and thus was he everywhere present with every one of them, so that whatever they all did, ought properly to be ascribed to him." Affairs grew desparate with the besieged, and many of them, prior to surrender, "made a purse of their stomachs," as our author expresses it, swallowing a number of gold coins that the victors might not profit by their wealth.

So all of them came disarmed before the kings of England and France outside the city and were given into custody.

The causes which led the French king soon after this to desert King Richard and abandon the expedition altogether, are described as follows. After mentioning (certainly without a sign of disapproval) that Richard beheaded all his captives except one of the most distinguished, the writer says :—

“ A certain marquess of Montferrat, a smooth-faced man, had held Tyre, which he had seized on many years ago, to whom the king of the French sold all his captives alive, and promised the crown of the region which was not yet conquered ; but the king of the English withstood him to the face. ‘ It is not proper,’ said he, ‘ for a man of your reputation to bestow or promise what is not yet obtained ; but further, if the cause of your journey be Christ, when at length you have taken Jerusalem, the chief of the cities of this region, from the hand of the enemy, you will, without delay or condition, restore the kingdom to Guy, the legitimate king of Jerusalem. For the rest, if you recollect, you did not obtain Acre without a participator, so that neither should that which is the property of two be dealt out by one hand.’ Oh, oh ! how fine for a goodly throat ! The marquess, bereft of his blissful hope, returns to Tyre, and the king of the French, who had greatly desired to strengthen himself against his envied ally by means of the marquess, now fell off daily ; and this added to the continual irritation of his mind—that even the scullion of the king of the English fared more sumptuously than the cupbearer of the French. After some time, letters were forged in the tent of the king of the French, by which, as if they had been sent by his nobles out of France, the king was recalled to France. A cause is invented which would necessarily be respected more than it

deserved ; his only son, after a long illness, was now despaired of by the physicians ; France exposed to be desolated, if after the son's death, the father (as it might fall out) should perish in a foreign land. So, frequent council being held between the kings hereupon, as they were both great and could not dwell together, Abraham remaining, Lot departed from him. Moreover, the king of the French, by his chief nobles, gave security by oath for himself and his vassals to the king of the English, that he would observe every pledge until he should return to his kingdom in peace."

But, after all, the story of the Crusade occupies but a secondary place in this author's narrative. Here and there it comes in by fragments, just as the news from the East may be supposed to have reached the monasteries of England, diverting attention from time to time amid the troubles at home. To the modern reader the domestic history of England under Richard I. is of very inferior interest ; the imagination is engrossed by his adventures in the Holy Land, and what befel him on his way thither and back to his own kingdom. But in the brief chronicle of Richard of Devizes affairs wear their natural aspect, and the progress of the Crusade, though watched with the deepest interest, is thrown into the background. We follow the acts of King Richard, not as in a romance, but as in a journal, with the pride of contemporaries and fellow-countrymen in achievements which have made our king and nation distinguished above all others. Yet with the greatest possible sympathy on our part we cannot help feeling the more immediate pressure of things at home, where Earl John

is gnashing his teeth with anger at the chancellor, and the latter with all his astuteness is at length unable to contend with him. We learn how the chancellor, after in vain calling upon the city of London to close its gates against the earl, throws himself for his own safety into the Tower, and is watched by the citizens that he may not escape ; also, how Earl John comes to London, where a great meeting is held and elects him chief justiciary of the kingdom, ordering that all castles shall be surrendered to such as he shall appoint ; how the chancellor, placed at bay and without hope of assistance, even then refuses to acknowledge him ; how the Tower is more closely besieged in consequence ; and how the chancellor at last quits the fortress and goes to meet his accusers, promising to submit to whatever should be determined, so that he is compelled to surrender his castles, but cannot be got even then to acknowledge himself in the wrong, or yield up any office committed to him by the king, till he has appealed by message to the king himself. The heroism of the chancellor, one would think, might have excited some small share of the admiration so freely bestowed upon the heroism of King Richard ; but it meets with little enough from Richard of Devizes.

The modern reader will, however, form his own comment on various subjects quite apart from the reflections in which our author is pleased to indulge. For Richard of Devizes had not the gift of prophecy, and could not discern the germ of great

future good in what seemed to him a mere result of anarchy. Thus, just after the passage above quoted about the parting of the French and English kings, we are told of the first incorporation of the city of London, which is recorded as follows :—

“On that day the commonalty of the Londoners was granted and instituted, to which all the nobles of the kingdom, and even the very bishops of that province, are compelled to swear. Now for the first time London, its conspiracy being pardoned, found by experience that there was no king in the kingdom, as neither king Richard himself, nor his predecessor and father Henry, would have suffered this to be done for one thousand thousand marks of silver. How great evils forsooth may come forth of this conspiracy, may be estimated by a definition, such as this. The commonalty is the pride of the mob, the dread of the kingdom, the ferment of the priesthood (*tumor plebis, timor regni, tepor sacerdotii.*”)

Another subject on which this Winchester monk felt very strongly was the conduct of Hugh de Nonant, bishop of Coventry, in removing monks from his cathedral and filling their places with secular canons. He and his monks seem to have been on bad terms for some time, and in October, 1190, when two new bishops were consecrated at Westminster by Archbishop Baldwin, Hugh de Nonant laid his complaint before the primate and the other assembled bishops, that they had laid violent hands on him and drawn his blood before the altar. He had already, however, before complaining, expelled the greater part of them, and his object in laying the case before his brother

prelates was to obtain their sanction to what he had done. The bishops shared his feelings and approved the act. Monks were laymen and apt to be a little insubordinate now and then ; so the bishops, although it is said they only yielded to Hugh de Nonant's importunity, could not but sympathise with what was done. Bishop Hugh accordingly not only expelled the monks but broke down all the workshops of the monastery, that secular industry might no longer be carried on within its walls. Nay, he removed the walls themselves, and made use of the materials in finishing his own cathedral, and employed freely the property of the monastery in giving wages to masons and plasterers. Special delicacies from two of the chief manors of the monks were always placed on his table before him. With the rest of their revenues he endowed prebends, some of which he placed for ever at the disposal of the see of Rome for the benefit of the cardinals, appointing certain cardinals prebendaries from the very first. A fine row of houses soon grew up for the accommodation of the new canons, even of the absent ones, in case that once in their lives they were ever tempted to visit the place. Not one of the prebendaries kept regular residence.

“‘This, forsooth,’ exclaims our monk with indignation, ‘this forsooth is true religion ; this should the Church imitate and emulate.’ It will be permitted the secular canon to be absent from his church as long as he may please, and to consume the patrimony of Christ where, and when, and in

whatsoever luxuries he may list. Let them only provide this, that a frequent vociferation be heard in the house of the Lord. If the stranger should knock at the door of such, if the poor should cry, he who lives before the door would answer (he himself being a sufficiently needy vicar) ‘Pass on, and seek elsewhere for alms, for the master of the house is not at home.’ This is the glorious religion of the clergy, for the sake of which the bishop of Chester, the first of men that durst commit so great iniquity, expelled his monks from Coventry. For the sake of clerks irregularly regular *—that is to say, of canons, he capriciously turned out the monks ; monks who, not with others’, but with their own mouths praised the Lord, who dwelt and walked in the house of the Lord with unanimity all the days of their lives, who, beyond their food and raiment knew nothing earthly, whose bread was always for the poor, whose door was at all times open to every traveller : yet they did not thus please the bishop, who never loved either monks or their order. A man of bitter jocularity, who even though he might occasionally spare some one of them never ceased to worry the monks.”

We must now take leave of Richard of Devizes, a writer to whom, considering the brevity of his chronicle we have perhaps devoted more attention than our limits justly warranted. But as an exponent of his own times he stands alone. A more detailed and even a more interesting account of Richards I.’s expedition to the Holy Land has been written by an actual eye-witness ; but it is devoted to that subject alone. There are also other chronicles which treat of the internal affairs of England, but none with so much zest. Whoever really seeks

* This is a bitter sarcasm. Canons of the order of St. Austin were called regular canons, because they lived under his rule. But these were not even regular canons of St. Austin.

to comprehend the spirit of Cœur de Lion's age—the spirit of the monk, of the crusader, and of the politician, should read the chronicle of Richard of Devizes before all others. His style is a little artificial, owing to his extreme love of expressing himself in the words of classical authors. His pages are full of quotations, which are better evidence of his extensive reading than of a highly cultivated taste. But it must be admitted that his powers of description were of no mean order, and that the matter of his little treatise is of rare and exceptional value.

A remarkable picture both of monastic and of social life in England at the end of the twelfth century, may be seen in the chronicle of Joceline of Brakeland, monk of St. Edmundsbury,* giving an account of the energetic government of Abbot Sampson of that monastery. Sampson's predecessor Hugh was old and feeble, and had got the house into debt. The farms, forests, and manor houses of the abbey were all going to decay, and to keep up the dignity of the house he borrowed money at interest. The debt of the monastery had been regularly increasing for eight years before the abbot's death; and what was worse, every minor official had a seal of his own and bound himself in like manner, both to Jews and Christians. For these practices the cellarer had been

* Edited for the Camden Society, by John Gage Rokewode, in 1840; and afterwards translated by T. E. Tomlins, under the title of *Monastic and Social Life in the Twelfth Century*.

deposed, and the old abbot was induced to make master Sampson his subsacrist, who kept a very strict survey over the workmen employed in the monastery and took care "that no breach, chink, crack, or flaw should be left unrepaired so far as he was able." After the abbot's death he was elected to fill his place, not directly, but as the result of various conferences between a deputation of monks and the king.

Thoroughly imbued with the monastic spirit himself, he seems to have been in every way well fitted to rule in such a community. The cause of his first becoming a monk he had related himself to our informant Joceline. When a child of nine he had dreamed the devil appeared to him with outstretched arms before the gates of a monastery and wanted to seize him, on which he screamed out "St. Edmund, save me!" and awoke calling upon a saint whose name he verily believed he had never heard before. His mother, hearing the dream, very naturally took him to St. Edmund's to pray; and on coming near the monastery he exclaimed to her, "See, mother, this is the very place I saw in my dream!" There could not be a doubt what to do with such a child.

The following picture of the man is not a little interesting :—

"The abbot Sampson was of middle stature, nearly bald, having a face neither round nor yet long, a prominent nose, thick lips, clear and very piercing eyes, ears of the nicest sense of hearing, lofty eyebrows, and often shaved; and he

soon became hoarse from a short exposure to cold. On the day of his election he was forty and seven years old, and had been a monk seventeen years ; having a few grey hairs in a reddish beard, with a few grey in a black head of hair which somewhat curled ; but within fourteen years after his election, it all became as white as snow ; a man remarkably temperate, never slothful, well able and willing to ride or walk till old age gained upon him and moderated such inclination ; who on hearing the news of the cross being captive, and the loss of Jerusalem, began to use under-garments of horse-hair and a horse-hair shirt, and to abstain from flesh and flesh meats ; nevertheless he desired that meats should be placed before him while at table for the increase of the alms dish. Sweet milk, honey and such like things he ate with greater appetite than other food. He abhorred liars, drunkards, and talkative folks ; for virtue ever is consistent with itself and rejects contraries. He also much condemned persons given to murmur at their meat or drink, and particularly monks who were dissatisfied therewith, himself adhering to the uniform course he had practised when a monk. He had likewise this virtue in himself that he never changed the mess you set before him. Once when I, then a novice, happened to serve in the refectory, it came into my head to ascertain if this were true, and I thought I would place before him a mess which would have displeased any other but him, being served in a very black and broken dish. But when he had looked at it, he was as one that saw it not. Some delay taking place, I felt sorry that I had so done ; and so, snatching away the dish I changed the mess and the dish for a better, and brought it to him ; but this substitution he took in ill part, and was angry with me for it. An eloquent man was he both in French and Latin, but intent more on the substance and method of what was to be said than on the style of words. He could read English manuscript very critically, and was wont to preach to the people in English, as well as in the dialect of Norfolk, where he was born and bred ; wherefore he caused a pulpit to be set up in the church for the ease of the hearers, and for

the ornament of the church. The abbot also seemed to prefer an active life to one of contemplation, and rather commended good officials than good monks ; and very seldom approved of any one on account of his literary acquirements, unless he also possessed sufficient knowledge of secular matters ; and whenever he chanced to hear that any prelate had resigned his pastoral care and become an anchorite, he did not praise him for it. He never applauded men of too complying a disposition, saying ‘ He who endeavours to please all, ought to please none.’”

He himself was a man not to be trifled with. Extravagance had been so long tolerated in the office of the cellarer, that even with a change of men it could not be altogether checked. Abbot Sampson associated a clerk with the new cellarer to act as his controller, and when even that measure proved ineffectual, took the office into his own hands. It was a very important office indeed ; for the cellarer bought provisions for the convent, sold their corn for them, and levied a number of different dues within the town.

But even Abbot Sampson himself failed occasionally in securing the rights of his convent as against the town. It was urged upon him that the monastery had not its fair share in the increasing prosperity of the country ; that while the burgage rents of other towns in England were enhanced, St. Edmund’s only paid the abbot forty pounds as it had done of yore. The burgesses had been quietly allowed to ignore the rights of the lord abbot. Many were the stalls and sheds and shops they had set up in the market-place merely

by agreement with the town bailiffs, without the assent of the convent. The convent are of opinion that it is high time to stop this sort of thing. The burgesses are summoned to make answer and appeal from the abbot's court to the king's ; they claim that the town is free by charter in respect of all tenements held for one year and a day in time of peace without any claim being made upon them ; also they allege divers old customs which the monastery do not admit. Our abbot, however, thinks it will not do to disturb old possessors right and left. He accepts as a compromise the payment of one hundred shillings. The burgesses agree, but are slack in paying even that, and offer a silken hood of the same value every year on condition of being quit of the tithes of their profits demanded by the sacrist ; and this being refused, we lose both our silken hood and our hundred shillings. A practical comment upon an old saw, thinks Joceline, for—

“ He that will not when he may,
When he will, he shall have nay.”

But our abbot is much more spirited in vindicating our spiritual rights against the Archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter, legate of the apostolic see, who, coming home from the north, sends two clerks to express his intention of paying us a visit, and to know if we will receive him as a legate is received elsewhere. On this we take counsel, and come to the determination that we are

willing to receive him with all honour and reverence, and we send messengers of our own along with his to intimate the same. But “our intention was that in the same way as we had done to the Bishop of Ely and other legates, so, in like manner, should we show him all possible honour, with a procession and ringing of bells, and that we should receive him with the other usual solemnities, until he should come into the chapter house, perhaps with the intention of making his visitation, which, if he were to proceed in doing, then all of us were to oppose him might and main to his face, appealing to Rome and standing upon our charters.” Meanwhile, however, the archbishop is gratified by our reply ; but we, for our part, lose no time in sending a messenger to the Pope to know if we be accountable to any legate except one sent by his Holiness *à latere*. The Pope decides in our favour, and sends the archbishop a prohibition against exercising jurisdiction over any exempt church like that of our monastery. So the primate’s purpose is defeated, and our liberties are successfully maintained.

This process of sending to Rome was not always free from difficulty. Abbot Sampson himself, in former days, had gone on such a mission when the times were full of danger :—

“ It was reported to the abbot that the church of the Woolpit was vacant, Walter of Coutances being chosen to the bishopric of Lincoln. He presently convened the prior and great part of the convent, and, taking up his story, thus began : ‘ Ye well know what trouble I had in respect of the

church of Woolpit ; and, in order that it should be obtained for your own use, I journeyed to Rome at your instance, at the time of the schism between Pope Alexander and Octavian ; and I passed through Italy at that time, when all clerks bearing letters of our lord, the Pope Alexander, were taken, and some were imprisoned, and some hanged, and some, with nose and lips cut off, were sent back to the Pope, to his shame and confusion. I, however, pretended to be a Scotchman ; and, putting on the garb of a Scotchman, I often shook my staff in the manner they use that weapon they call a gaveloc* at those who mocked me, uttering threatening language, after the manner of the Scotch. To those who met and questioned me as to who I was, I answered nothing but "*Ride, ride Rome, turn Canterbury.*"† This I did to conceal myself and my errand, and that I should get to Rome safer under the guise of a Scotchman. Having obtained letters from the Pope, even as I wished, on my return I passed by a certain castle, as I was taking my way from the city, and behold the officers thereof came about me, laying hold upon me and saying, " This vagabond, who makes himself out to be a Scotchman, is either a spy, or bears letters from the false Pope Alexander." And while they examined my ragged clothes, and my leggings, and my breeches, and even the old shoes which I carried over my shoulders, after the fashion of the Scotch, I thrust my hand into the little wallet which I carried, wherein was contained the writing of our lord the Pope, close by a little jug I had for drinking ; and the Lord God and St. Edmund so permitting, I drew out that writing together with the jug, so that, extending my arm aloft, I held the writ underneath the jug. They could see the jug plain enough, but they did not find the writ ; and so I got clear out of their hands, in the name of the Lord. What-

* A javelin or pike.

† Intended probably to convey to his questioners the idea, "I ride to Rome, and then return to Canterbury." In other words, "I am a mere pilgrim, first going to Rome, and then to visit St. Thomas à Becket's shrine."

ever money I had about me they took away ; therefore it behoved me to beg from door to door, being at no charge, until I arrived in England.”

Of the good works done by Abbot Sampson during his tenure of office, it is specially to be noted that he bought stone houses in the town for schools, endowed the hospital of Babwell for the support of the poor with lands which he had purchased from King Richard, and caused the guest-house, larder, and various other portions of the monastery, to be rebuilt, or roofed over with tiles instead of thatch, to exclude all danger of fire. A stone almshouse, too, is made to replace a wooden one. The abbot is discouraged from bestowing costly gifts upon the church by the fact that the silver table of the great altar, and other precious ornaments, had to be given up for the redemption of King Richard ; but he devotes his principal efforts to making a crest to the shrine of St. Edmund which no man hereafter shall dare to lay hands on ; for though everything else that was valuable all over England was taken for King Richard’s redemption, that shrine was left inviolate. The question had, indeed, come before the justices of the Exchequer, whether the shrine of St. Edmund should not be, at least in part, stripped of its ornaments ; but the abbot answered firmly, “ Be assured that will never be done by me, nor can any man compel me to assent to it. I will, however, open the doors of the church ; let any man enter who will, and let him come who dares.” Then each of

the justices answered with an oath, "Not I, not I. St. Edmund is severe even upon the remote and absent; much more will he rage against those present who attempt to carry off his tunic." So the shrine is safe, it is believed, for after ages, "and now plates of gold and silver resound between the hammer and the anvil."

It is no wonder that in a case of this kind our abbot resists the demands of the king's justices. He can even resist the king himself. King Richard, at the solicitation of some of his courtiers, desires of him the wardship of the infant daughter of Adam de Cokefeld. It is the feudal right of the abbot himself, and he has already given it away. He sends a messenger to the king to excuse himself. Richard storms at the refusal, and swears he would be revenged on the proud abbot, were it not for the reverence of St. Edmund, whom he fears. On the return of the messenger, the abbot calmly answers the king's threats: "Let the king send, if he will, and seize the ward; he has power to do his own will, and carry off the whole abbey. I will never bend to give my assent to what he asks, nor shall it ever be done by me; for it is to be feared that such things will be drawn into precedents to the prejudice of my successors. For this matter I will never give money to the king. Let the Most High see to it. I will patiently endure whatever may befall." On this people expected that the king would be still more deeply offended; but, instead of that, he wrote to the abbot in a friendly

tone, and desired of him only a present of some of his dogs, which the abbot had the wisdom to send, with some horses, and further gifts superadded. The result was that the king publicly commended the abbot's loyalty, and sent him a valuable ring which he had received from Pope Innocent III., the first gift sent to him by the new pontiff after his consecration.

We have already made pretty considerable extracts from a very brief chronicle, besides giving the substance of other passages of great interest ; but almost every page is full of matter that invites quotation. Besides contentions with the townsmen of St. Edmund's, the abbey has controversies with the city of London and with other powerful bodies elsewhere :—

“ The merchants of London claimed to be quit of toll at the fair of St. Edmund ; nevertheless, many paid it, unwillingly, indeed, and under compulsion ; wherefore a great tumult and commotion was made among the citizens of London in their hustings. However, they came in a body and informed the abbot, Sampson, that they were entitled to be quit of toll throughout all England, by authority of the charter which they had from King Henry the Second. Whereto the abbot answered, that were it necessary he was well able to vouch the king to warranty that he never granted them any charter to the prejudice of our church, nor to the prejudice of the liberties of St. Edmund, to whom St. Edward had granted and confirmed *toll* and *theam* and all regalities before the conquest of England ; and that King Henry had done no more than give to the Londoners an exemption from toll throughout his own lordships, and in places where he was able to grant it ; but so far as concerned the town of

St. Edmund, he was not able so to do, for it was not his to dispose of. The Londoners hearing this, ordered by common council that no one of them should go to the fair of St. Edmund ; and for two years they kept away, whereby our fair sustained great loss, and the offering of the sacrist was very much diminished indeed. At last, upon the mediation of the Bishop of London and many others, it was settled between us and them, that they should come to the fair, and that some of them should pay toll, but that it should be forthwith returned to them, that by such a colourable act the privilege on both sides should be preserved. But in process of time, when the abbot had made agreement with his knights, and, as it were, slept in tranquility, behold again ‘the Philistines be upon thee, Sampson !’ Lo, the Londoners, with one voice, were threatening that they would lay level with the earth the stone houses which the abbot had built that very year, or that they would take distress by a hundred-fold from the men of St. Edmund’s, unless the abbot forthwith redressed the wrong done them by the bailiffs of the town of St. Edmund’s who had taken fifteen pence from the carts of the citizens of London, who, in their way from Yarmouth, laden with herrings, had made passage through our demesnes. Furthermore, the citizens of London said that they were quit of toll in every market, and on every occasion, and in every place throughout all England, from the time when Rome was first founded, and that London was founded at the very same time. Also that they ought to have such an exemption throughout all England, as well by reason of its being a privileged city, which was of old time the metropolis and head of the kingdom, as by reason of its antiquity. But the abbot sought reasonable imparlances thereupon until the return of our lord, the King of England,* that he might consult with him upon this ; and having taken advice of the lawyers, he replevied to the claimants those fifteen pence, without prejudice to the question of each party’s right.”

* This was during King Richard’s absence on the Crusade.

Another dispute of a similar nature led to proceedings of a more energetic character. It was with the monks of Ely, who had set up a market at Lakenheath, having obtained a charter from the king. The monks of St. Edmund's complain of the infringement of their rights, but suggest a compromise. The monks of Ely refuse to give way ; on which those of St. Edmund's procure an inquest to be had, and the king gives them a charter that no market be henceforth held within the liberty of St. Edmund, without the abbot's assent. The steward of the hundred accordingly goes to interdict its being held, but meets with so much abuse and violence that he is driven to make good his retreat. The abbot being then at London consults with lawyers about it, and sends his bailiffs with a company of men of St. Edmund's to interrupt the market and carry off any buyers and sellers they might find into custody. At dead of night six hundred men, well armed, took the road from St Edmund's to Lakenheath. Their approach was no sooner observed than all who were at the market ran hither and thither, so that not one of them could be found. The prior of Ely had made preparations with his bailiffs to defend the buyers and sellers, but he was quite discomfited and dared not stir out of his inn ; while the men of St. Edmund's carried off shambles, stalls, and cattle, the latter being given up by replevin shortly after. It was a glorious victory ; but the bishop, it seems, took proceedings afterwards for the outrage, and the final result is not recorded.

Thus, even monastic life, we find, was not without occasional excitement ; and we are thankful to the pen which has described for us so vividly what these excitements were. In this brief chronicle of Joceline of Brakeland we realise many things for which we look in vain to more elaborate compositions ; and for a social picture of the times it is altogether unique. The monk, we can very well perceive, was by no means so cut off from the world as to have lost all sympathy with what his neighbours were doing out of doors. On the contrary, it is he more than others who is concerned in all that passes. We can see distinctly how the town itself is the mere foster-child of the monastery ; how its markets, its fairs, and its customs all belong to the abbot ; how the monastery provides for the education of the district, and is the centre not merely of the religious, but even of the social life of the community. And surely the facts which illustrate all this are quite as material to a true conception of our history as anything related by more voluminous writers concerning the great events of the times in which they wrote.





CHAPTER IV.

IMAGINATIVE AND SOBER HISTORY—WELSH AND NORTHERN WRITERS.

Robert of Gloucester's patronage of literature—Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*—Its popularity—Its apocryphal character and extraordinary legends—Their acceptance as history—Clergymen more witty than monks—William of Newburgh denounces Geoffrey's *History*—Giraldus Cambrensis also—Credulity of Giraldus—His account of his birthplace—His family and personal history—His election to St. David's—Goes to Ireland with Prince John—His *Topographia Hiberniae*—His *Vaticinal History of the Conquest of Ireland*—Description of Henry II.—Itinerary through Wales—Character of the North of England historians—Simeon of Durham—Ailred of Rievaulx—William of Newburgh—Roger of Hoveden—*Chronicle of Melrose*—Walter Hemingburgh—The *Chronicle of Lanercost*.

AT this stage in our narrative it seems right to draw attention to some new influences which began to tell upon historical literature under the Norman kings, and prevailed a long time after.

The encouragement which learning had received at the court of Henry I. of England, the king so honourably known in history by the surname of Beauclerc, continued to yield fruit for some time

after his death. His natural son Robert, Earl of Gloucester, became the patron of letters in his place; and it is a striking fact that through the stormy period that ensued, authors looked up to him as their friend and benefactor. To him William of Malmesbury dedicated both his earlier and his later history, and it was in compliance with his request that the latter work was undertaken. The terms in which William of Malmesbury acknowledges the earl's patronage are honourable alike to the writer and the person addressed. "You condescend," he said, "to honour with your notice those literary characters who are kept in obscurity, either by the malevolence of fame, or the slenderness of their fortune. And, as our nature inclines us not to condemn in others what we approve in ourselves, therefore men of learning find in you manners congenial to their own; for, without the slightest indication of moroseness, you regard them with kindness, admit them with complacency, and dismiss them with regret. Indeed, the greatness of your fortune has made no difference in you, except that your beneficence can now almost keep pace with your inclination."

This was a truly graceful compliment; but it was exceeded by another very celebrated author, who likewise dedicated his work to Earl Robert. It cannot be doubted, however, that the language used by Geoffrey of Monmouth in presenting to his patron his *History of the Kings of Britain*, was the result of artful and studied flattery. Geoffrey

of Monmouth modestly disclaims the honours of original authorship. He is perhaps the first of those ingenious romancers who profess to be only translating out of some other language works really composed by themselves. His friend Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, he says, had lent him a very ancient book in the British tongue, containing the whole early history of the British nation ; and at the archdeacon's request, though he, Geoffrey, had not made a study of fine language, he had been induced to translate it into Latin. He had not adorned it with rhetorical flourishes, which might only have served to distract attention from the history. But perhaps the work in consequence was rather bald and unattractive. "To you, therefore," he says, "Robert, Earl of Gloucester, this work humbly sues for the favour of being so corrected by your advice that it may not be thought to be the poor offspring of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but when polished by your refined wit and judgment, the production of him who had Henry, the glorious King of England, for his father, and whom we see an accomplished scholar and philosopher, as well as a brave soldier and expert commander ; so that Britain with joy acknowledges that in you she possesses another Henry."

The *History* which Geoffrey thus succeeded in palming off upon the world under such distinguished patronage, is in truth one of the most extraordinary works of art that the Middle Ages ever succeeded in producing. Of mythical tales

and curious legends there was certainly no lack in those days ; but the fabrication of a long consecutive history, to fill up a gap or form a prelude to the authentic annals of a nation, was something altogether new. Yet the story was so wonderfully told, the invention was so admirable, and the marvels related appealed so strongly to the imagination, that the world for ages after seems to have been at a loss what to make of it. It was not easy, even at the first, for a man of any judgment to be a thorough believer ; but it required some boldness, even after centuries had passed away, to dispute the authority of fictions which owed their vitality in the first instance to Geoffrey's imaginative pen.

Very soon after its first appearance the book was translated into several languages. It was versified by two popular poets in Norman French, and by another in English. The stories of King Arthur became renowned throughout Christendom, and were augmented by continual additions. Romances without end were woven upon the same original text. "Indeed," as Sir Thomas Hardy remarks, "it is hardly going beyond bounds to say that there is scarcely an European tale of chivalry down to the sixteenth century that is not derived, directly or indirectly, from Geoffrey of Monmouth. If he had never written, our literature would not, in all probability, have been graced by the exquisite dramas of Lear and Cymbeline ; and much of the materials which he has woven into his work would no doubt have perished."

Geoffrey, it has been supposed, was a native of the place after which he was called. That he was so, however, is by no means certain, as the surname is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that he was Archdeacon of Monmouth. Very little is known about his life, except that he held this dignity, and that he was promoted in 1152 to the bishopric of St. Asaph, which he could only have held for a very brief period, as his successor was elected in 1154. But it is quite clear from the nature of his writings that he was a Welshman who sought to invest the early history of his nation with a glory and an interest far surpassing that of the Anglo-Saxon annals. How far he was assisted in the process by existing traditions and legends it is perhaps in vain to speculate ; but it is not very easy to regard his work as a mere collection, or even, as what it professes to be, a mere translation from a British original.

The truth evidently is that as the Welsh people came more in contact with Norman civilization, the Celtic imagination was fired with the thought of their own proud position among the inhabitants of Britain. They alone were the true descendants of the race that had possessed the island before Julius Cæsar landed. They had their own princes, their own laws, and their own legends, reaching far back beyond the era of Roman history itself. The Welsh to this day are great genealogists, who love to trace their pedigrees back to a very remote period. There are also among them great linguists,

who pursue the etymology of words with a zeal perhaps even greater than the philologists of other nations. It was, therefore, a problem for Welshmen more than for any other people to discover the origin of the name of Britain, and to tell how the island was first peopled. The name of Britain was derived from Brutus, and this Brutus was a great-grandson of *Æneas*, the hero of Virgil's epic. The adventures of Brutus, as recorded by Geoffrey, are certainly not less wonderful than those of his supposed ancestor in the *Æneid*. Driven, with a little band of followers, out of Italy, Greece, and Mauritania successively, notwithstanding prodigies of valour performed in each of these countries, he is directed by an oracle to seek out an island lying beyond Gaul in the Western main, where he should find a second Troy, and where his descendants should be kings of the whole earth. He accordingly passes through Aquitaine, ravaging the country, and having various conflicts with native kings. At last he sails into Britain, inhabited then by none but a few giants, whom he and his companion, Corineus, delighted to encounter; and having gained complete possession of the island, he finds his new Troy on the banks of the Thames. It was by a corruption of the original name, we are informed, that new Troy became afterwards Trinovantum; and, at a later date still, after it had been fortified by King Lud, the brother of King Cassivelaunus, who reigned in Britain when Julius Cæsar landed, it obtained from him the name of Kaer-Lud, or

Lud's-town, which, of course, the reader quite understands to have been the original form of London.

Such is the beginning of this marvellous history, which becomes even more marvellous as it proceeds; and how it could ever have been regarded as serious, especially since the days of printing, when books have become more generally accessible, is the greatest marvel of all. The circumstantial account given of Brutus and all the long line of his successors might indeed well deceive uncritical readers in an age accustomed to believe in wonderful and miraculous legends; but apart altogether from the extraordinary character of the things related, there was always much to shake the faith of any one who was tolerably well read in the history of other nations. Not only does the native king Cassivelaunus twice drive back Julius Cæsar from the shores of Britain before the conquest of the island is effected, but more than one British king subdues continental countries, and among others, the great King Arthur subdues Denmark, Norway, Aquitaine, and Gaul, without leaving the faintest traces of the achievement in the annals or literature of any other nation. Grotesque attempts are moreover made in some places to dovetail Roman history into the narrative, or to modify it in such a way as to augment the glory of the Britons. Thus the story of Brennus, the Gaul, who sacked the city of Rome, is turned to strange account. Geoffrey claims this achievement for

Brennius, a British king, who had first conquered Gaul, and he otherwise absurdly perverts the story by making Porsena one of the Roman consuls who sued to him for peace.

But how a people, possessed of such an ancient history, preserved, as it would seem, by their own historians, could have been aware of contemporary events in distant regions in some of the remotest periods, is perhaps the most wonderful thing of all. For we are assured that of the successors of Brutus, one was contemporary with the prophet Samuel ; that Ebraucus built the city of York, or Kaer-Ebrauc, “about the time that David reigned in Judea and Sylvius Latinus in Italy, and that Gad, Nathan, and Asaph prophesied in Israel ;” that Bladud built the city of Bath, and made hot baths in it about the time when Elijah prayed it might not rain. This attempt to synchronise the fabulous British history with the Biblical and other records is, we need not say, as full of impossibilities as all the rest. The whole narrative is, indeed, from beginning to end, a tissue of absurdities.

That speculative etymologies had much to do with its fabrication is clearly shown not only by the instances of Brutus giving his name to Britain and an equally mythical King Lud to London, but by a good number of other cases. King Lud was evidently invented to account for Ludgate rather than for London, but his name only required a little manipulation to make him godfather to the English metropolis itself. Ebraucus in the same way founds

Eboracum or York, Belinus erects Billingsgate, and Leicester, which we are told was originally Leircestre, owed its name and origin to Leir, the King Lear whose story was dramatised by Shakespeare. But these and other things, being introduced into the narrative with all seriousness, yet as mere incidental facts, have such a very plausible appearance that we are reminded somewhat of the description of Laputa and the grave comments therein contained, as to the origin and etymology of the name of the island.

Nothing, indeed, more resembles the imaginative creations of Dean Swift in the consistency with which they are carried out through the details of a long narrative than this British history of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The Trojan fable is not merely the starting point of the story. It reappears at intervals throughout the narrative, and is boldly placed in the light of a well-known fact recognized in former days by the whole civilized world. Julius Cæsar pauses upon the Gallic coast before he ventures on the invasion of Britain, and fixes his eyes upon the ocean. The island is visible to him in the distance across the Channel. "In truth," he says, "we Romans and Britons have the same origin, since both are descended from the Trojan race. Our first father, after the destruction of Troy, was *Æneas*; theirs Brutus, whose father was *Sylvius*, the son of *Ascanius*, the son of *Æneas*. But I am deceived if they are not much degenerated from us," and so forth. The idea of Julius

Cæsar owning a common ancestry with the barbarians whom he invaded, and speaking of them thus, as the kinsmen of his own people, has in it something peculiarly ridiculous.

Yet such was the popularity of Geoffrey's *History*, so widely was it read, so universally talked about, and so credulously accepted by the many, that from this time the Trojan origin of the British people came to be regarded in the light of an established fact. Ethnology had not yet become a science, and if any one doubted the hypothesis, no one, at least, was able to confute it. In course of time Brutus fairly took his place among the historical personages of antiquity. Learned monks in their cloisters sat down to write the annals of their country, and began, as a matter of course, with Brutus. A whole series of chronicles of a later age, copied one from another with variations, derive from this the common epithet of *The Brute*; and long after the revival of letters and the printing press had given the world better means of judging, learned antiquaries were still found to dispute with each other as to the reality of this shadowy hero.

Thus it is impossible to do justice to the historical literature of the Middle Ages without taking into account the extraordinary influence which Geoffrey's *History* exercised for a long time on the historical imagination. In a more legitimate sphere, indeed, its influence survives even at the present day. From Geoffrey of Monmouth, as we

have already indicated, Shakespeare obtained the story of King Lear ; and from the same source are derived the prophecies of Merlin, and the fabled history of King Arthur, which have supplied poets and romancers with endless materials for their art from the days of Sir Thomas Malory to those of Spenser, and from the days of Spenser to those of Tennyson.

But this bold invasion of the province of history by the genius of romance, was a thing at that time so unprecedented, indeed so utterly inconceivable to most readers, that there seemed no alternative between accepting it for what it professed to be, and denouncing it as an impudent fabrication. The whole narrative stood in marked and violent contrast to the sober histories penned by monastic annalists. The very first words of the introduction were such as would at once put a modern reader on his guard. "Whilst occupied with many and various studies," says the author, "I happened to light upon the *History of the Kings of Britain*, and wondered that in the account which Gildas and Bede, in their elegant histories, had given of them, I found nothing said of those kings who lived here before the Incarnation of Christ, nor of Arthur, and many others who succeeded after the Incarnation ; though their actions deserved immortal fame, and were also celebrated by many nations, being, as it were, inscribed upon their minds, and pleasantly reported from memory." The whole thing was an attempt to supply from imagination and legend a record of the pre-historic

times that Bede and Gildas had left untouched. Not that the entire narrative is to be regarded as due to the invention of a single man ; for both Brutus and Arthur had become popular heroes long before, and Welsh bards had doubtless vied with each other in producing life-like stories of the mythical ancestors of recorded British kings, whose descendants were yet looked upon as princes. But Geoffrey had woven together with consummate art a multitude of things, some part of which he had extracted from the writings of an old author called Nennius, some part he may have listened to with eagerness from the lips of native Welshmen, and some part he had himself invented in a similar spirit. It was certainly a very different kind of history, and gathered from quite a different region, from the histories that had been penned in cloisters.

For Geoffrey, it must be remembered, was not a monk ; he was an archdeacon. The age of pure monastic history is now at an end, when the secular clergy, as they are called, clergymen who live habitually in the world, and have continual intercourse with all classes of men, take up the pen and write. Endowed with the same love of letters as their monastic brethren, and compelled by social intercourse to study the various humours of men in a way for which the discipline of the convent afforded no training whatever, the foremost ecclesiastics of the day were distinguished by their wit and sociable feeling quite as much as by their learning. And these qualities shine remarkably in

their writings. The monks recorded the actions of men ; ecclesiastics painted their heroes to the very life. The dignity of archdeacon seems to have been the most favourable position in the Church for the cultivation of letters. Henry of Huntingdon was an archdeacon ; so was Geoffrey of Monmouth. The most lively writer of the succeeding age was Giraldus Cambrensis, Archdeacon of Brecknock. His witty friend Walter Mapes, author of many humorous and satirical writings both in prose and verse, and also, it would seem, of the earliest *Romances of the Round Table*, was Archdeacon of Oxford.* They were all admirable observers of men, knew thoroughly what human nature was, admired it, sympathized with it, and quizzed it in a way which the recluse in his cell must have considered bordering upon levity. Never had ink and parchment been lowered to such trivial uses.

Imagination has from this time more influence over historical writing than it ever had before. But it was not to be expected that the first great effort of the imaginative school would be allowed in that age, to pass altogether unrebuted. A northern monk, named William of Newburgh, denounced with indignation the mendacity of Geoffrey's *History*. It was a great merit, he observed, in the work of Gildas, notwithstanding the badness of his style that he did not fear to speak the truth of his own

* Mapes, however, was probably an author long before he was archdeacon. If the date given by Sir Thomas Hardy (Catalogue, ii. 488) be right, he was only made an archdeacon in 1196.

people, of whom he had little good to record. According to Gildas, they were neither valiant in war nor faithful in peace. "But now," he adds, "a certain writer has appeared in our times, who, to wipe away these blots on the character of the Britons, composes ridiculous figments about them, and with impudent vanity extols their valour above that of the Macedonians and the Romans. This man is named Geoffrey, with the surname of Arthur, because he has dressed up in a Latin garb with the honest name of history stories of Arthur, derived from early British fables, and augmented by his own ingenuity; and with still greater daring, he has published as genuine and trustworthy prophecies the most fallacious divinations of a certain Merlin, to which also he has certainly added very much of his own while translating them into Latin."

Notwithstanding the popularity of Geoffrey's *History* there cannot be a doubt that these strictures were felt to be just by readers possessed of any discrimination. On the other hand, they have been attributed by later writers to a feeling of spite against the Welsh people. Such a feeling, however, could not have actuated Giraldus Cambrensis, himself a Welshman, though of Norman descent, and in his own way possessed of quite as lively an imagination as Geoffrey himself. And not only does Giraldus, in the course of his writings, distinctly speak of Geoffrey's *History* as fabulous, and take pains to set aside some of his fancied

etymologies, but he evidently agrees with William of Newburgh in regarding the work as an impudent imposture; in proof of which he relates a singular story of a Welshman named Melearius, who had an extraordinary familiarity with unclean spirits. The man used to see the spirits equipped as hunters, with horns hung from their necks. He knew when any one spoke falsely, for he saw the devil leaping and exulting upon the liar's tongue. Although he could not read, he could set his finger on a passage in any book that contained a falsehood, and in walking through the dormitory of a religious house, he could tell the bed of a monk who was not truly devout. "If the evil spirits oppressed him too much, the *Gospel of St. John* was placed on his bosom, when, like birds, they immediately vanished; but when that book was removed, and the *History of the Britons*, by Geoffrey Arthur, was substituted in its place, they instantly reappeared in greater numbers, and remained a longer time than usual on his body and on the book."

There is nothing like confuting fictions by facts; but, somehow, even this remarkable manifestation of its falsehood did not utterly destroy the credit of Geoffrey's *History*. Perhaps, as the modern reader will conjecture, the authority of Giraldus could not be expected to carry much more weight than that of the author whom he so condemned. In point of fact, though in a different way, Giraldus had often taxed the credulity of his readers every whit as much as Geoffrey of Monmouth himself,

Giraldus, in fact, was, just like Geoffrey, a very imaginative Welshman, a lover of wonders, and a retailer of extraordinary stories. For some of these he had been seriously taken to task by a contemporary, under whose criticisms he evidently felt very uncomfortable. He had talked of a wolf holding conversations with a priest, and giving evidence that he was a man transformed into an animal. He had spoken of an island in which men never died, and of another in which no female creature could live. He had described a great many other things almost equally absurd. When, pointing to instances such as these, his adversaries attempted to cast discredit on his writings, Giraldus quoted the example of Balaam's ass to show that they were not beyond the limit of possibility ; but, not much liking to rest on that defence, he added that he did not vouch for all that he had reported as if it was undoubted truth. He was not himself such a firm believer as to entertain no sort of misgivings, and he would neither maintain the facts where they had not come within his knowledge, nor plainly admit that they were fictitious.

It seems a little curious that to such a man the fictions in Geoffrey's *History* should have been so unpalatable. But, in point of fact, they were not so in all things. Giraldus himself believed that Brutus was the ancestor of the Britons, and that Loegria, the Welsh name of England, was derived from Locrinus, the eldest son of Brutus. He believed even in King Arthur. In all that tended to exalt

the antiquity of the Welsh nation and confer distinction upon their ancestry, he seems to have acquiesced most readily; but some of the deeds related of King Arthur were just a little too much. It would be hard to get well-educated men to believe things so utterly at variance with received history, and a scholar like Giraldus could not help feeling sorely that they tended to bring his nation into disrepute.

This Giraldus, however, has an interest for us on his own account altogether apart from what he says of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Having left us an autobiography, we know more about him than we do about most mediæval historians; and as his personal history is very much interwoven with everything else that he wrote, a brief sketch of his life, in connection with his writings, will best set forth what we have to say of him.

He was born in the year 1147, at the Castle of Manorbeer, in Pembrokeshire, pleasantly situated on the coast, about five miles west of Tenby. He himself gives a delightful picture of his birthplace, which those who have seen it can easily believe was not overdrawn. For the castle of Manorbeer still stands, a very perfect ruin; and, though the orchard and the fishponds are gone, in which Giraldus so delighted, the situation is still a charming one. The following is his description of the place:—

“The castle called Maenor Pyrr, that is the mansion of Pyrrhus”—(Welsh etymology again,

striving to work out a fabulous history !)—“is about three miles distant from the castle of Pembroke. It is conspicuous for its turrets and battlements, and stands on the top of a hill, extending on the western side towards a seaport. On the north side is an excellent fishpond close to its walls, remarkable for its extent and the depth of its waters ; and on the same side a very beautiful orchard, shut in here by the fishpond and there by a grove, remarkable for the projection of its rocks and the height of its hazel trees. On the right hand of the promontory, between the castle and the church, near the site of a very large pond and a mill, a rivulet of never-failing water finds its way into a valley, made sandy by the violence of the winds. To the west, and at some distance from the castle, the Severn, in a winding angle, enters the Irish Sea ; and the southern rocks, if they bent a little further towards the north, would form an admirable harbour. From this point you may see almost all the ships from Britain, driven by the east wind towards Ireland, bravely daring the inconstancy of the winds and the furious blind rage of the sea. The country is well supplied with corn, with fish, and with wine imported ; and, better than all, from its nearness to Ireland, it enjoys a salubrious air. Demetia, indeed, with its seven cantreds, is the most beautiful as well as the most powerful district of Wales ; Pembroke is the finest part of Demetia ; and the place I have just described is the most delightful part of Pembroke. It is evident, there-

fore, that Maenor Pyrr is the pleasantest spot in Wales ; and the author may be pardoned for saying so much in praise of his native soil and his own birthplace."

From the country of his birth Giraldus derived the surname of Cambrensis, or the Welshman, by which he is popularly known. By his enemies, on the other hand, he was sometimes called Sylvester, or the Savage. But his family name was De Barri, indicating a Norman descent by the preposition "de," though Barri was only the name of an island in the Bristol Channel, a little way off the coast of Wales. By the mother's side he was descended from the celebrated Nesta, mistress of Henry I., and daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, prince of South Wales. Nesta, by her marriage with Gerald de Windsor, Castellan of Pembroke, became the ancestor of the long line of the Fitzgeralds, and also gave birth to a daughter named Angharad, who married William de Barri, and was the mother of Giraldus. He was the youngest son of that family, named, no doubt, after his grandfather the Castellan ; and being allied in blood with the first conquerors of Ireland, a country which he himself visited, he wrote a very admirable history of its conquest, besides what he called a *Topography* of the island, which, however, is more in the nature of a general account of its natural history and inhabitants, invaluable to historians of later times as the only vivid picture of Ireland and the Irish that the Middle Ages have left behind them.

His education was committed to his uncle, David Fitzgerald, Bishop of St. David's, with whom he remained till he reached his twentieth year. From a child he seems to have displayed great partiality for the Church, insomuch that his father was accustomed to call him "the little bishop." He was evidently precocious, and must have gained from his earliest youth an acquaintance with Latin authors, quite unusual in that age; for his writings, interlarded as they are with innumerable quotations, show a very intimate and extensive familiarity with the ancient classics. In his twentieth year he was sent to pursue his studies at Paris, where he attained high distinction. He returned to England in 1172, being then in his twenty-fifth year, soon after the murder of Thomas à Becket. Four years later an event occurred which may be called the turning-point in his life. The see of St. David's fell vacant by his uncle's death. Giraldus had been meanwhile made Archdeacon of Brecknock, an office in which he displayed unusual zeal in supporting the bishop's authority, and punishing irregularities. It was remembered by the Welsh that St. David's had once been an archbishopric, and they were anxious to restore its metropolitan dignity, and make the Church in Wales once more independent of the see of Canterbury. The chapter fixed their eyes upon Giraldus, as a man whose energy and abilities were likely to advance this cause, and elected him without the king's consent. Giraldus himself was alarmed at their

temerity, but the object was as dear to his heart as to that of any Churchman of the principality ; indeed, rather more so ; and though he would have renounced the election as too hasty, he had already drawn upon himself and the chapter the fierce indignation and jealousy of an ever-watchful and politic king.

The chapter soon were humbled, and made every effort to appease the king's displeasure. The election was cancelled, and Peter de Leia, prior of Wenlock, was chosen in place of Giraldus, who now returned to Paris, and gave himself up to the study of civil and canon law. The martyrdom of Becket had more than ever brought into prominence the old, ever-recurring question of the jurisdiction of Church and State, and Giraldus was full of it. He lectured, according to his own account, to overflowing audiences ; and we may well believe him. He was a man full of fervour, and his after life showed that he had the courage of his opinions. But owing to the irregularity with which he received his revenues, he returned to England in 1180. He repaired to his archdeaconry, where his superabundant zeal brought him naturally into collision with his diocesan, Peter de Leia, a prelate as lax in enforcing needful discipline, as he was indifferent about the claims of St. David's to the primacy of Wales. Giraldus had no toleration for a bishop who would not excommunicate the most notorious offenders, lest he should find the tails of all his cows cut off. "Let him sell his cows," said

Giraldus, “or remove them to some safer spot, and do that justice which it is his office to do.” The poor bishop was soon weary of remonstrances and dropped the reins of government altogether. He absented himself from his diocese, and appointed Giraldus administrator of the see in his place ; but ere long, some differences arising between him and the chapter, he ventured in his absence to suspend certain archdeacons and canons ; on which Giraldus immediately threw up his appointment, and, contrary to the principle which he was so anxious to uphold, appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury against his diocesan. He was successful, and the bishop’s sentence was reversed.

In 1184, Giraldus seems to have made a favourable impression upon the king, who invited him to court, and made him one of his own chaplains. Henry was glad to employ his services in the pacification of Wales ; but for politic reasons he left them poorly rewarded, and Giraldus bitterly complained of the king’s ingratitude. The king, however, appointed him preceptor to his youngest son, Prince John, with whom, in 1185, he went into Ireland in the capacity of secretary. The young man was only in his eighteenth year, and had not yet fully developed that base and selfish character which he afterwards left behind him as king ; so that Giraldus had some hopes of him. Still, he tells us that he was prone to vice, rude to monitors, and placed no restraint whatever upon his passions. The best that could be hoped was that, after sowing

his wild oats, he would improve in maturer years ; and Giraldus did entertain this hope most fervently.

This visit of Giraldus to Ireland occasioned the composition of his *Topographia Hiberniæ*, the earliest, and perhaps the most attractive of all his works. So, at least, the modern reader will probably regard it, though for some reason it met with an unfavourable reception from many of his contemporaries. Readers were not in those days students of nature, and the learned seem to have thought it a waste of writing materials to describe the rivers, lakes, and mountains, birds, beasts, and fishes, and the almost equal brutal human inhabitants of a barbarous island, their habits and modes of life. Giraldus, however, who was never deficient in self-confidence, felt sure that his book would live. "He had devoted," he said, at intervals of leisure, three years to his *Topography*, and two years more to his *Vaticinal History of the Conquest of the Island*,—"works which," as he quietly observes, "will be read by posterity, although they offend men of the present generation : and though carped at now, will be profitable in future times."

Giraldus, in truth, had a fine eye for nature, and he was justified in believing that his observations would be found valuable in after ages. The singular thing is that so acute an observer should have laid himself open, as we have seen, to the attacks of his opponents by a credulity on some

points altogether extraordinary ; for though he did not think it necessary to attribute the absence of noxious reptiles in Ireland to the achievements of St. Patrick, there was apparently nothing of the nature of a prodigy reported to him by others to which he was not ready to attach some degree of credit. Out of three "distinctions," or sections, into which the work is divided, the second is entirely devoted to things of this sort ; the common sense of the author is confined to the other two. But the natural history of Ireland, the miracles of Ireland, and the people of Ireland, are the three great subjects of the book, and it must be admitted that he does full justice to them all.

We may, however, observe that superstitions, though by no means a noble subject of contemplation, are in themselves a matter of historical study, which we cannot afford altogether to neglect. It is not from the sober, unimaginative historian, that we gain much light as to the real forces that governed the spirits of men in the wars and tumults and rebellions, of which history is full. But the credulous writer is a transparent medium through which we can discern things otherwise invisible. Special incidents, too, which led to no material results in the great drama of events, have occasionally a historical significance in this respect by no means to be despised. Take, for example, the following instance from the *Vaticinal History* of Giraldus. Henry II., on his return from Ireland, landed at St. David's Bay.

“On landing he proceeded to St. David’s with great devotion, in the guise of a pilgrim, on foot, and staff in hand, and was met by the canons of the cathedral in solemn procession, who received him with due honour and reverence at the White Gate. While the solemn procession was orderly passing onward, a Welsh woman suddenly threw herself at the king’s feet, and made some complaint against the bishop of the diocese, which was explained to the king by an interpreter. Receiving, however, no redress, the woman became abusive, and raising her voice, and loudly clapping her hands, she repeatedly shouted, in the presence of all the company, ‘Avenge us this day, Lechlawar, avenge our race and nation on this man !’ And being stopped and thrust forth by the people of the country who understood British (*i.e.* Welsh), she still continued to vociferate the same words with increased violence, alluding to a certain prophecy of Merlin’s, which, though current among the vulgar, was not authentic, to the purport that a king of England, returning through St. David’s after the conquest of Ireland, where he had been wounded by a man with a bloody hand, should die on Lechlawar. For this was the name given to a stone which was placed across the stream, dividing the cemetery of St. David’s from the north side of the church, to form a bridge. The stone was of beautiful marble, and the surface was worn smooth by the feet of those who passed over it. Its length was ten feet, its breadth six, and it was one foot thick. In the British (Welsh) language the word Lechlawar means ‘the speaking stone ;’ for there is an ancient tradition that on some occasion when a corpse was carried over it the stone spoke at that very moment, but in the effort cracked in the middle, which crack is still to be seen. This gave rise to a barbarous superstition, which from that time to the present day forbids any dead bodies being carried to their burial over the bridge. The king coming to the stone paused for a moment, having, perhaps, heard the prophecy mentioned ; but having glanced keenly at it, he summoned up his resolution, and without further delay, walked across.

Then turning back and looking at the stone, he said with some indignation, 'Who now will have any faith in that liar, Merlin?' "

Nothing, perhaps, requires greater intrepidity than boldly and knowingly to confront a popular superstition. It will be observed that Giraldus himself, in this case, though he discredits the prophecy, saves the credit of the supposed prophet Merlin, by the remark that this prophecy was not authentic. In another place where he tells the same story, he adds, that one of the bystanders, in answer to the king's imputation on Merlin's soothsaying, cried out, "Thou art not that king by whom Ireland is to be conquered, or of whom Merlin prophesied!" Superstition certainly dies hard.

The *Vaticinal History of the Conquest of Ireland*, from which the above extract is taken, was written, as we are informed by the author, two years after the completion of the *Topography*. The expedition to which it relates was one in which Giraldus naturally took peculiar interest; for a large number of its captains and leaders were kinsmen of his own. And it must be owned that a more careful, accurate, and graphic history does not exist. The whole story of the conquest is related in the exact order of the events themselves, with a vigour and clearness, and, generally speaking, with a simplicity, that make the work both easy and delightful reading, even at this day. The only exceptions to simplicity consist in classical quotations, and long imaginary speeches of Irish and

Norman chieftains, after the manner of Livy and other historians. But to atone for these defects, we have personal portraits of Strongbow, and of almost all the principal leaders on either side, with estimates of their characters which bring the men vividly before us. In no other mediæval historian, certainly, do we find writing so animated or so picturesque.

Irish chieftains and Norman barons, however, cannot be expected to interest the general reader, without some detailed account of their actions. As a specimen, therefore, of this style of treatment in Giraldus, we will give his portrait of King Henry II. himself:—

“ Henry II., king of England, had a reddish complexion, rather dark, and a large round head. His eyes were grey, bloodshot, and flashed in anger. He had a fiery countenance, his voice was tremulous, and his neck a little bent forward; but his chest was broad, and his arms were muscular. His body was fleshy, and he had an enormous paunch, rather by the fault of nature than from gross feeding. For his diet was temperate, and indeed in all things, considering he was a prince, he was moderate and even parsimonious. In order to reduce and cure, as far as possible, this natural tendency and defect, he waged a continual war, so to speak, with his own belly, by taking immoderate exercise. For in time of war, in which he was almost always engaged, he took little rest, even during the intervals of business and action. Times of peace were no seasons of repose and indulgence to him, for he was immoderately fond of the chase, and devoted himself to it with excessive ardour. At the first dawn of day he would mount a fleet horse, and indefatigably spend the day in riding through the woods, penetrating the depths of forests, and crossing the ridges of hills. On his return home in the

evening he was seldom seen to sit down, either before he took his supper or after ; for notwithstanding his own great fatigue, he would weary all his court by being constantly on his legs. But it is one of the most useful rules in life, not to have too much of any one thing, and even medicine is not in itself perfect and always to be used. Even so it bef^l the king ; for he had frequent swellings in his legs and feet, increased much by his violent exercise on horseback, which added to his other complaints, and if they did not bring on serious disorders, at least hastened that which is the source of all, old age. In stature he may be reckoned among men of moderate height, which was not the case with either of his sons ; the two eldest being somewhat above the middle height, and the two youngest somewhat below.

“ When his mind was undisturbed, and he was not in an angry mood, he spoke with great eloquence, and, what was remarkable in those days, he was well learned. He was also affable, flexible, and facetious, and, however he smothered his inward feelings, second to no one in courtesy. Withal, he was so clement a prince, that when he had subdued his enemies, he was overcome himself by his pity for them. Resolute in war and provident in peace, he so much feared the doubtful fortune of the former, that, as the comic poet writes, he tried all courses before he resorted to arms. Those whom he lost in battle he lamented with more than a prince’s sorrow, having a more humane feeling for the soldiers who had fallen than for the survivors ; and bewailing the dead more than he cared for the living. In troublesome times no man was more courteous, and when all things were safe no man more harsh. Severe to the unruly, but clement to the humble ; hard towards his own household, but liberal to strangers ; profuse abroad, but sparing at home ; those whom he once hated he would scarcely ever love, and from those he loved he seldom withdrew his regard. He was inordinately fond of hawking and hunting, whether his falcons stooped on their prey, or his sagacious hounds, quick of scent and swift of foot, pursued the chase. Would to God

he had been as zealous in his devotions as he was in his sports.

“ It is said that after the grievous dissensions between him and his sons, raised by their mother, he had no respect for the obligations of the most solemn treaties. True it is that from a certain natural inconstancy he often broke his word, preferring rather, when driven to straits, to forfeit his promise than depart from his purpose. In all his doings he was provident and circumspect, and on this account he was sometimes slack in the administration of justice, and, to his people’s great cost, his decisions in all proceedings were dilatory. Both God and right demand that justice should be administered gratuitously ; yet all things were set to sale, and brought great wealth both to the clergy and laity ; but their end was like Gehazi’s gains.

“ He was a great maker of peace, and kept it himself ; a liberal almsgiver, and an especial benefactor to the Holy Land. He loved the humble, curbed the nobility, and trod down the proud ; filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich empty away ; exalting the meek, and putting down the mighty from their seats. He ventured on many detestable usurpations in things belonging to God, and through a zeal for justice (but not according to knowledge), he joined the rights of the Church to those of the Crown, and therein confused them, in order to centre all in himself. Although he was the son of the Church, and received his crown from her hands, he either dissembled or forgot the sacramental unction. He could scarcely spare an hour to hear mass, and then he was more occupied in counsels and conversation about affairs of state than in his devotions. The revenues of the churches during their avoidance he drew into his own treasury, laying hands on that which belonged to Christ ; and he was always in fresh troubles and engaged in mighty wars, he expended all the money he could get, and lavished upon unrighteous soldiers what was due to the priests. In his great prudence he devised many plans, which, however, did not all turn out according to his expectations ;

but no great mishap occurred which did not originate in some trifling circumstance.

“ He was the kindest of fathers to his legitimate children during their childhood and youth, but as they advanced in years looked on them with an evil eye, treating them worse than a step-father ; and although he had such distinguished and illustrious sons, whether it was that he would not have them prosper too fast, or whether they were ill-deserving, he could never bear to think of them as his successors. And as human prosperity can neither be permanent nor perfect, such was the exquisite malice of fortune against this king, that where he should have received comfort he met with opposition ; where security, danger ; where peace, turmoil ; where support, ingratitude ; where quiet and tranquillity, disquiet and disturbance. Whether it happened from unhappy marriages, or for the punishment of the father’s sins, there was never any good agreement either of the father with his sons, or of the sons with their parent, or between themselves.”

In no other mediæval author do we meet with such minute and careful painting of persons and characters as this.

Prince John returned to England in the winter of the same year in which he went to Ireland. The ill success of his expedition was attributed by Giraldus, not to the character of the commander, but to the cool response of Henry II. to the invitation of Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to undertake a crusade for the liberation of the Holy City. It was a special honour, he thought, to the King of England to be solicited before any other prince to promote so noble an enterprise ; yet Henry in effect allowed the enemies of Christ to take possession of Jerusalem without raising a

hand against them. Giraldus, however, for his part, had an opportunity of showing his own zeal a few years later. Meanwhile, he remained in Ireland collecting materials for his work for a few months after Prince John had left, and returned to Wales between Easter and Whitsuntide, 1186. Next year, having completed his *Topography of Ireland*, he gave a public reading of it before the university of Oxford, on three successive days, each section of the work (called in the scholastic language of the times a “distinction”) occupying a day to read. The reading was crowned each day by a sumptuous entertainment, given at the author’s expense,—on the first day, to the poor people of the town, on the second to the most eminent doctors and students, on the third, to the other scholars, knights, and burgesses. Various are the ways by which authors in different ages have climbed to the temple of Fame; and this was one of the ways seven hundred years ago.

In 1188, the king appeared to have repented his lukewarmness as to the fate of Jerusalem, and took the cross at Gisors in Normandy. Many followed his example, and Archbishop Baldwin was sent to preach the Crusade in Wales, accompanied by Ranulph de Glanville the Justiciary, and by Giraldus—a journey as remarkable in its way, and within its own sphere probably far more fruitful in results than any expedition to the Holy Land itself. Giraldus wrote an itinerary of the archbishop’s progress. His presence by the side of the metro-

politan was doubtless itself a great means of soothing ancient jealousies; and though some of the canons of St. David's appealed to Rhys ap Griffith to prevent the archbishop visiting their cathedral, the Welsh prince felt that he could not interrupt a journey undertaken with such an object. The progress began at New Radnor, where, after a sermon by the archbishop, explained to the Welsh by an interpreter, Giraldus himself first took the cross, and was followed in so doing by the Bishop of St. David's and by several Welsh princes and notables. The journey was pursued through Hay and Brecknock, Abergavenny, Usk and Caerleon; then by the southern districts along the Bristol Channel to Pembroke and St. David's, and from thence northwards through Cardigan, to Carnarvon and Bangor. The Isle of Anglesea was next visited, and the whole of North Wales was afterwards traversed to Chester and Shrewsbury. Such a progress was a thing altogether unprecedented, and must have produced a deep impression. "It requires no effort of imagination," says Mr. Brewer,* "to conjure up the effects which an archbishop in the twelfth century, clothed in the majestic insignia of his high office, attended with the solemn and striking ceremonial belonging to the highest dignity in the hierarchy, fortified with papal bulls and regal authority, would exercise over a simple and half-civilized people, enthusiastic by nature, and remarkable for their subservience to the visible

* *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, I. pref., p. xlix.

emblems of the spiritual power. As the solemn procession wended its way among the retired valleys and romantic mountains of South Wales, now with banner and crucifix emerging from some woody glade or picturesque ravine, now encamping on the bank of some fabled river, or skirting the straggling hamlet, the sermon in the open air from the patriarchal lips of the successor of St. Thomas, the hymn floating and undulating like a cloud of incense, the occasion, the motive, the tender thought of Jerusalem in captivity, of the daughter of Zion insulted by the Saracen, of Christ's living members put to shame ; all these mingling in one stream of pious enthusiasm, ardent faith, glory, passion and adventure, might have roused an imagination more callous and sluggish than that of the Welsh."

To the little band engaged in the expedition there were, of course, hardships and difficulties to be encountered in so rugged a country ; but the archbishop, who seems to have been a man of considerable humour, made light of them. Having on one occasion worked his way with great difficulty through a steep valley and found a temporary resting-place, he sat down upon an oak that had been uprooted in a storm, and while he and all his followers were out of breath with their exertions, asked pleasantly if any one could kindly amuse the company by whistling a tune ? In answer to the general laugh he then bade them listen to the sweet notes that some particular bird was pouring

forth in a wood close by. A little conversation then arose about the melody of birds in which some one remarked that the nightingale was never heard in Wales. "The nightingale," remarked the archbishop, "followed wise counsel and never came into Wales. We, who have penetrated and gone through it, have not been so well advised." It is worth pages of more solid matter to learn from these light touches of Giraldus how an archbishop preaching a crusade could indulge his wit in moments of relaxation. It was the innocent humour of a very upright and earnest man of whom Giraldus at the end of his work draws a very pleasing and admirable portrait.

The *Itinerary of Wales* is discursive, and abounds in matter similar in character to that of the *Topography of Ireland*. Occasionally, indeed, the author repeats what he has said in the previous work, as in his remarkable and very accurate description of the salmon's mode of leaping. In another place, also, he gives a very interesting account of the beaver, an animal which even at that date had become rare in Wales, though it still frequented the valley of the Teivy. Of prodigies and miracles, too, the *Itinerary* contains abundance, and some of such a transparent character that the author's credulity becomes the more amazing. Thus we are gravely told about a stone in Anglesea resembling a human thigh, which, when carried away from its place to whatever distance, always returned in the night-time of

its own accord. But apparently the last time its peculiar virtue had been tried was in the reign of Henry I., when Hugh, Earl of Chester, having gained possession of the island, ordered the stone to be fastened with strong iron chains to a larger stone and thrown into the sea. Next morning, of course, so ran the legend, it was found in its original position. "On which account," says Giraldus, "the earl issued a public edict that no one, from that time, should presume to move the stone from its place." A singularly unnecessary decree if the legend had been a true one!

The *Itinerary* contains also many graphic touches and incidental anecdotes, some of which have been turned to good account by historians and romancers, as the reader will doubtless remember in the following instance:—

"I have judged it proper to insert in this place an answer which Richard, king of the English, made to Fulke, a good and holy man, by whom God in these our days has wrought many signs in the kingdom of France. This man had among other things said to the king: 'You have three daughters, namely, Pride, Luxury, and Avarice; and as long as they shall remain with you, you can never expect to be in favour with God.' To which the king, after a short pause, replied: 'I have already given away those daughters in marriage: Pride to the Templars, Luxury to the Black Monks, and Avarice to the White.'"

In 1189, to further the Crusade, Giraldus went over with Henry II. into France, where the war broke out between the king and his sons, and Henry himself died broken-hearted the same year.

Richard I., succeeding, sent Giraldus back to Wales to prevent disturbances arising from the change. He was now less enthusiastic for the Crusade, and obtained from the papal legate dispensations both for himself and for the Bishop of St. David's to stay at home. He was now rising in favour, and within a few years was offered successively the bishoprics of Bangor and Llandaff, both of which he declined. No Welsh bishopric, except St. David's, could tempt him to abandon literary pursuits, to which he seems now to have been more devoted than ever. In 1192, he was on the point of revisiting Paris when the war broke out between Richard Cœur de Lion and Philip Augustus, and compelled him to remain at home. He took up his abode at Lincoln, renowned in those days for its school of theology, and remained there till the death of his old rival, Peter de Leia, left the bishopric of St. David's once more vacant. The object of his old ambition was now offered him by the chapter without solicitation on his part. But some adverse influence again crossed his path. Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, refused to accept his nomination, and resolved that no Welshman should be appointed. A weary controversy arose, in which Giraldus three times visited Rome to procure from Innocent III. a recognition of the rights of the see of St. David's. But in the end his election was set aside, as well as that of a rival who had been uncanonically elected in his place; and the bishopric was finally

conferred on a third person, not more favourable to the independence of the see than Peter de Leia had been. Giraldus was disgusted, but appealed no more. He lived to see the bishopric again vacant, and again offered to him in 1215 ; but he had now learned wisdom by experience and refused positively to accept it. He is supposed to have died in 1223.

And now, taking leave of our Welsh friends Geoffrey and Giraldus, we must devote a brief space to another school of historians. No contrast could well be greater than that between the writers we have just been describing and those of the north of England. We change at once from imagination to realism, from amusing bombast, simple-minded credulity and picturesque descriptions to the most sober, the most accurate, and often the most prosaic of mediæval chronicles. In drawing attention to their writings here, we do not purpose to treat of them at a length at all proportionate to their real importance. But it would be impossible to pass over in silence the works of some of the most weighty of our early historians ; and a very few words may be enough to make them known to the general reader.

It was in the north of England that monasticism from the first had taken the strongest hold. It is in the north that we first meet with evidences of native genius and a real native literature. The foundation of Whitby Abbey by St. Hilda unsealed the lips of the poet Cædmon, and taught

him to pour out the story of Creation in Anglo-Saxon verse. The two monasteries founded near Durham by Benedict Biscop, were the school of the Venerable Bede, and the teaching of Bede himself must have done much to educate a new race of thinkers and writers. At York, too, under Archbishop Albert, in the middle of the eighth century, was a great school of learning, from which emanated the illustrious scholar, Alcuin, who turned the court of Charlemagne into a university. Nowhere in those early times was education more advanced, nowhere was thought so active, as in the north of England.

From the days of Bede a long succession of chroniclers endeavoured, at however great a distance, to follow in his footsteps, and to continue the annals of Northumbria from the date at which he left off. Soon after the Conquest the inmates of his old monastery at Jarrow removed to Durham; and Simeon of Durham, one of those who migrated from the older establishment, carried down the history to the year 1129. The work, however, that bears his name, though printed as one, is really two separate treatises, and it is evident that the earlier fragment was the production of earlier writers in the north of England. Mr. Stubbs is inclined to think that Alcuin may have had some hand in it. The work of Simeon himself has always stood in very high repute, and various continuations were written to it in early times. One separate line of continuators, all belonging to

the same monastery, brought it down even to the days of the Reformation.* But it must be owned that these give merely the dry bones of the history of their own cathedral and of the bishops who ruled there. Another and a more interesting continuation was written in the monastery of Hexham by John of Hexham, as he is called, the prior of that house, who brought the narrative down to 1154. He, however, was preceded, as a historian, by Prior Richard of the same monastery, who wrote a very valuable history of the acts of King Stephen, ending with an account of the Battle of the Standard. Another account of that battle was written by Ailred, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Rievaulx, in Yorkshire, who was led to undertake the task out of regard for the founder of his monastery, Sir Walter d'Espe. This is not by any means such an important work as the other, much space being taken up by speeches of the different leaders before the battle, and especially of Sir Walter d'Espe, who was one of those who fought there.

A little later we have the *Chronicle of Holyrood*, mainly devoted to Scotch affairs, and after it the *History* of William of Newburgh, one of the best original authorities for the reign of Henry II. This writer, to whom we have already made reference as the severe censor of the fictions of Geoffrey of Monmouth, was a native of Bridlington, born in the

* See *Historiæ Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, published by the Surtees Society.

year 1136, and was known to his contemporaries as William Petit or *Parvus* ; but he became an Austin canon of the abbey of Newburgh, in Yorkshire, in which he received his education. His history, though commencing with the Conquest, may really be considered contemporary, as the events prior to the reign of Stephen are compressed into less than a dozen pages. It is written in a very clear and interesting style, after the model of Bede, and generally with great judgment and common sense.

Roger of Hoveden (that is, of Howden, in Yorkshire) set himself to the task of continuing Bede's *History* down to his own day, with the aid of several former compilations. He divided his labours into two parts—a *Pars Prior* extending to the death of King Stephen ; and a *Pars Posterior*, from the accession of Henry II. to the year 1201. Of *Pars Prior*, almost all except the last seven years is borrowed from Simeon of Durham, and Henry of Huntingdon ; and throughout a considerable part of *Pars Posterior* he either followed or worked in common with Benedict of Peterborough, who has left us a chronicle of his own ; so that how far he is an original author is uncertain. But he is mentioned by Benedict himself as one of King Henry's clerks, whom he sent over from Poitou in 1174, to persuade some turbulent chieftains in Galloway, to become subjects of the English crown. From this it is evident that he enjoyed the confidence of a very able king on political matters ; and the fact is quite in accord-

ance with the character of his history, which though it professes to be merely annals, is altogether unlike the bald chronicles left by many other writers. It is, in fact, a very able political survey of the reigns of Henry II. and Richard I., including the commencement of King John's reign, full of information, not only about the affairs of England, but about those of France, and of Flanders, of Germany, Italy, and almost every other European country.

The *Chronicle of Melrose* is a compilation from the northern writers who succeeded Bede, to the beginning of the thirteenth century, but is continued as an original narrative, relating to the affairs of England and Scotland, as far as the year 1270, when the only manuscript breaks off abruptly in relating the attempt of a Saracen to assassinate Prince Edward in the Holy Land. The information contained in this chronicle gives it a very high value to historians; but it is neither a philosophical history nor in itself a very entertaining record of the events it relates.

Walter Heningburgh, a canon of the priory of Gisborough in Yorkshire, wrote also a history commencing with the Conquest, which he carried down at first to the days of Edward I. He then added a continuation into the reign of Edward II. ; "but whether the latter part of this be lost," says his editor, Mr. Hamilton, "or was never written has not been ascertained. The *History of Edward III.* seems to have been composed as information of

passing events was procured ; and the abrupt termination of the work with a rubric of a new section, *De Bello inter Reges Anglie et Francie apud Cressy Commissio*, must be regarded either as indicating that the health of the writer at this period was such as to forbid further literary exertion, or that he deceased while waiting for more perfect information of the famous battle he intended to record."

As an original authority on the reigns of the three Edwards, Hemingburgh has always been esteemed of the highest value. He is a writer of clear judgment, and cultivated taste, whose accuracy of statement is only equalled by the elegance of his style. In the course of his narrative he quotes a number of documents of high importance, such as Edward I.'s confirmation of the Great Charter, and the document commonly known as the statute *de tallagio non concedendo*. He also quotes at full length a large number of original letters, especially in the reign of Edward III., in which the text is little more than a collection of what we might call State papers, connected together by a slender thread of historical explanatory narrative.

The *Chronicle of Lanercost*, which ends in the same year as Hemingburgh, appears to have received its name from a misapprehension as to the place where it was compiled. It had long been known as a very valuable record of Border history, but it remained in manuscript till the year 1839, when it was edited by Mr. Stevenson for the Bannatyne

and Maitland Clubs. Some of the passages, in which the writer refers to the priory of Lanercost, in Cumberland, are such as might easily have deceived a cursory reader; but Mr. Stevenson has very clearly shown that they by no means bear out the theory that the work was composed in that priory, while there is evidence scattered up and down the whole chronicle tending to show that the writer was a Minorite friar, most probably belonging to the convent of Carlisle. He seems, however, to have been at Berwick in the year 1312, when he saw and described the wonderful rope ladders by which Bruce and his comrades almost succeeded in scaling the walls of the castle, the attempt being only defeated by the barking of a dog. The friars, from their wandering habits, were great go-betweens in time of war, and our author, although entirely English in his sympathies, obtained a good deal of information from the brethren of his own order in Scotland. The immunities of the friars, however, were sometimes found troublesome, and in 1333, we find Edward III. commanding that all the Scotch friars in the convent at Berwick should leave the town, and that English friars should take their places. It is rather amusing to read that, when, in consequence of this order, two English friars came to the convent, some of their Scotch brethren while preparing to depart entertained the newcomers with much interesting conversation at dinner time, while others, breaking into the library, packed up all the books, chalices, and vestments,

ties them up in silk cloths, and carried them off, saying that they were articles lent by Patrick, Earl of March, who at that time had just come over to the English side. On the whole, the *Chronicle of Lanercost* is one of the most interesting of these northern records.





CHAPTER V.

RECORDS OF THE FRIARS.

Actual results of the Crusades injurious to Christian faith and morals—St. Dominic and the Preaching Friars—The Albigenses—St. Francis—The Eastern leprosy—Devotion of the Franciscans—Thomas of Eccleston's account of their settlement in England—Anecdotes—Aquinus and the Schoolmen—Trivet's *Annales*—Stubbs's *Archbishops of York*—Franciscan Schoolmen—Roger Bacon, Scetus, Occam.

To many of those who are familiar with mediæval chronicles the title prefixed to this chapter may seem a strange one. The direct contributions of the friars to historical literature are certainly few in number, and so slender in amount as to seem quite unworthy of notice beside the copious and abundant supplies of the monastic chronicles. Indeed, when one considers the amazing intellectual activity of the men of whom we are now to speak, their unproductiveness in the field of history is all the more remarkable, and it might well seem that in a work such as the present, it was hardly necessary to make any special allusion to their labours at all. But this would be to take a very contracted

view of a great subject. The historical literature of a country is not a thing to be studied entirely by itself; nor can the spirit of English chronicles be appreciated without reference to the labours of some who are not generally called by the name of chroniclers. More particularly in studying an age of great social revolution, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, is it necessary to turn aside from the pages of the regular historian, and systematic compiler of annals, to learn what thoughts possessed the minds of the most profound among the thinkers, and the most energetic among the doers of the day. For this reason it is that we must again call attention to the introduction of new religious orders, and bestow a few words, however brief, upon the writings of the friars and the schoolmen.

The Crusades had left their mark upon the world—indeed a good many marks; but no such mark as their authors had intended. The Holy Land had not been recovered from the Infidels; the Saracens had not been converted. It had been found practically impossible for Christians to treat the Moslem in the way the children of Israel were taught to treat the Canaanites—as men with whom no peace was to be made. The Christians of that day adopted too easily a very different principle and regarded their enemies for some time as men with whom no faith was to be kept. But even this was a rule impossible to be maintained. Relations necessarily grew up between the opposing com-

batants ; and ere long the commercial cities of the Mediterranean found the Infidel a very good customer. The Crusades had opened up new channels of commerce ; and with the material luxuries of the East came also its intellectual wares, its vices, and its horrible diseases.

Instead of the Christians converting the Moslem it seemed rather that the faith of Christendom itself was being undermined by Pagan philosophy and libertinism. While the Saracens still held the Holy Land, the Moors still kept possession of Spain. The science of the Arabians had gained great influence at the universities, and freethinkers were disposed to bow to the intellectual supremacy of Islam. Manichean tendencies asserted themselves all over Europe—in the doctrines of the Albigenses—in the open profligacy and epicureanism of Frederick II.—in the secret practices imputed to the Templars. The Church itself was grossly corrupt ; the law of priestly celibacy had made things even worse. The priesthood were thereby cut off from the social relations and everyday life of the community, while the superior sanctity attributed to their order only led to grosser demoralisation. “It is no longer true,” said St. Bernard, “that the priests are as bad as the people ; for the priests are worse than the people.” In such a state of matters, new agencies were absolutely needed to cope with the spiritual, moral, and physical diseases of the times.

For the spiritual evils, the Spaniard, St. Dominic,

believed the means of counteracting them was by the establishment of a trained society of preachers. He himself had the gift of eloquence in no common measure, and had already distinguished himself as a theologian at the universities of his native country, when he left Spain to accompany the bishop of Osma, his diocesan, whom Alfonso IX., of Castile, had sent on a diplomatic mission to the south of France. That mission accomplished, the bishop and he obtained leave of the Pope to take part in certain efforts which were then being made for the conversion of the Albigenses. His energy in this vocation soon became conspicuous and led to the institution of the order of Preaching Friars commonly called after him Dominicans. At first they were only new communities of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine; for the institution of new orders was not looked upon with favour; but in the end their rule was confirmed by a bull of Honorius III., in 1216, which conferred on them the distinctive name of *Fratres Prædicantes*. They were popularly known in England as the Black Friars.

Unhappily, mere preaching did not suffice to convert the heretics, and St. Dominic obtained papal authority to hold courts which formed an evil precedent for the Inquisition of after days. Suspected heretics were called before these tribunals and questioned as to their belief. The object may have been to reason with and convince the unlearned; the effect was only to confound them with

the subtleties of the schools. But the obstinate were punished, even with the punishment of death. This naturally did not tend to peace. Sharp disputes arose, and a papal legate who had rebuked to his face Count Raymond of Toulouse, was murdered by one of the count's dependants,—not indeed in cold blood, like Becket, but in an angry altercation arising out of his former boldness. Still, a papal envoy had died a martyr's death, and a crusade was proclaimed by the Pope against the unhappy heretics. Dominic himself, who had at first been solicitous rather to persuade than to persecute, was its principal instigator. Simon de Montfort was the leader of the expedition; and after a war of ruthless indiscriminate slaughter the unhappy Albigenses were in the end exterminated.

But though preaching to avowed heretics had thus failed in its intended effect, the order of the Preaching Friars became popular elsewhere. Their oratory was attractive, and they had an abode in every considerable town. Unlike the monks, whose ordinary life was spent within the cloister, or the clergy whose ordinary duties were discharged in church, these men were continually abroad among the people, preaching to them the duty of adhering to the Church, and warning them against heresy and schism. It added weight, moreover, to their exhortations that in order to qualify themselves for their mission, they had, in accordance with St. Dominic's injunctions, to renounce all private property, and depend for their subsistence upon

charity. Their dwelling-house and church might be sumptuous buildings ; but the friars themselves were to share in the poverty, the toil, and the labour of the classes to whom they principally addressed themselves.

But the popularity of the Dominicans, especially in England, was greatly exceeded by that of the Franciscan order.

St. Dominic had addressed himself too exclusively to the spiritual evils of the time. St. Francis, a layman, set himself rather to the relief of its physical ailments. His thoughts, like those of other men, had been at one time directed towards the Saracens, but he found work far more urgent and pressing to be done among the neglected population of the towns. Born at Assisi, in central Italy, he had been brought up as factor for his father, a wealthy merchant, and he had learned through his commercial occupations the real wants and miseries of the age. "He had to strip Christianity, in the first instance," says Mr. Brewer, "of the regal robe in which popes and prelates had invested it ; to preach it as the gospel of the poor and the oppressed. It was not to be a trap for men's obedience ; it was not to demand a surrender of that independence which the commons of the towns had guarded so jealously, and purchased at such costly sacrifices. He caught the poorest in their poverty ; the subtle in their subtlety ; sending among them preachers as ill-clad and as ill-fed, but as deep thinkers in all respects as themselves.

... His followers are to visit the towns two and two, in just so much clothing as the commonest mendicant could purchase. They are to sleep at nights under arches, or in the porches of desolate and deserted churches, among idiots, lepers, and outcasts ; to beg their bread from door to door ; to set an example of piety and submission."

It is difficult to realise the condition of the towns in those days. They were behind the country in civilization. Monasteries afforded to the rural population the means of education and supplied their spiritual wants ; but the towns possessed no such advantages. Least of all did the inhabitants of the low and fetid suburbs, where the last refugees from feudal tyranny took up their abode, —least of all did these dregs of city life, packed together in narrow lanes close upon the town ditch, know anything of the humanities, or experience any of the Christian charity of the times. It was in these quarters that plague and pestilence committed the most fearful ravages. In these quarters the Eastern leprosy took up its abode.

This loathsome and horrible disease completely baffled the medical skill of the time. No method was known by which to mitigate the scourge or restore the afflicted man to health ; only, for the sake of the community at large he must be turned out of house and home and cut off from social intercourse. St. Francis was the first who did anything to relieve the lot of these miserable outcasts ; but what a struggle with nature it required

in any one to attempt the task we may learn from his words alone. "When I was in the bondage of sin," he wrote, "it was bitter and loathsome to me to *see and look upon* persons infected with leprosy ; but that blessed Lord brought me among them, and I did mercy with them, and I departing from them, what before seemed bitter and loathsome was turned and changed to me into great sweetness and comfort both of body and soul."

In the *Mirror of his Life* (*Speculum Vitæ*), composed by some of his companions, we see how deliberately he set himself to overcome this loathing. On one occasion he fears he has given way to it in such a manner as to hurt the feelings of one of the unhappy sufferers. "Therefore," we are told, "wishing to make satisfaction to God and the leper, he confessed his guilt to Peter Cataneus, the minister general, and begged him to confirm the penance that he intended to impose upon himself. Then, said St. Francis, this is my penance ; to eat out of the same dish with this Christian brother. When all were seated at table a single dish was placed between St. Francis and the leper. He was a leper all over, disgusting for his open ulcers, especially as his fingers were covered with sores and blood, insomuch that as he dipped his fingers in the dish and carried the morsels to his mouth, the gore and blood dropped into the dish. As the friars looked on they were greatly grieved and pained at the sight. But for the reverence they bore him, not one dared utter a word. He that

saw these things bore record of them and wrote them."

A still finer triumph of his Christian fortitude and humility is recorded in the same work as follows :—

" He appointed that the friars of his order, dispersed in various parts of the world, should, for the love of Christ, diligently attend the lepers wherever they could be found. They followed this injunction with the greatest promptitude. Now, there was in a certain place a leper so impatient, forward, and impious, that every one thought he was possessed by an evil spirit. He abused all that served him with terrible oaths and imprecations, often proceeding to blows. What was still more fearful, he uttered the direst blasphemy against Christ and His holy Mother, and the holy angels. The friars endured this ill-usage patiently, but they could not tolerate his blasphemies ; they felt they ought not, and therefore they resolved to abandon the leper to his fate, having first taken counsel with St. Francis. Brother Francis visited the leper, and upon entering the room said to him, in the usual salutation : ' The Lord give thee peace, brother.' ' What peace,' exclaimed the leper, ' can I have, who am entirely diseased ? ' ' Pains that torment the body,' replied St. Francis, ' turn to the salvation of the soul if they are borne patiently.' ' And how can I endure patiently,' rejoins the leper, ' since my pains are without intermission night and day ? Besides, my sufferings are increased by the vexation I endure from the friars you have appointed to wait upon me. There is not one of them who serves me as he ought.' St. Francis perceived that the man was troubled by a malignant spirit, and went away and prayed to God for him. Then returning he said, ' Since others do not satisfy you, let me try.' ' You may, if you like ; but what can you do more than others ? ' ' I am ready to do whatever you please,' replied St. Francis. ' Then wash me,' replied the leper,

'because I cannot endure myself. The stink of my wounds is intolerable.' Then St. Francis ordered water to be warmed with sweet herbs, and, stripping the leper, began to wash him with his own hands, whilst a friar standing by poured water upon him."

Such were the duties that St. Francis undertook himself and enjoined upon his followers. How hard it seemed to comply with the severity of such a rule we can well imagine. When he first appeared before the Pope with a copy of the regulations which he proposed to lay down, they seemed so utterly repulsive and impracticable as only to excite contempt. The reception he met with on this occasion is recorded as follows by Roger of Wendover, a monk of St. Alban's, who was contemporary with St. Francis himself :—

" The Pope gazed fixedly on the ill-favoured mien of the aforesaid brother, his mournful countenance, lengthened beard, his untrimmed hair, and his dirty, overhanging brow ; and when he heard his petition read, which it was so difficult and impracticable to carry out, despised him and said, ' Go, brother, go to the pigs, to whom you are more fit to be compared than to men, and roll with them, and to them preach the rules you have so ably set forth.' Francis, on hearing this, bowed his head and went away ; and having found some pigs he rolled with them in the mud till he had covered his body and clothes with dirt from head to foot ; he then, returning to the consistory, showed himself to the Pope and said, ' My lord, I have done as you ordered me ; grant me now, I beseech you, my petition.' The Pope was astonished when he saw what he had done, and felt sorry for having treated him with contempt, at the same time giving orders that he should wash himself and come back to him again.

He therefore cleansed himself from his dirt, and returned directly to the Pope. The Pope, being much moved, then granted his petition, and, after confirming his office of preaching as well as the order he applied for, by a privilege from the Church of Rome, he dismissed him with a blessing."

Only by such indomitable perseverance could St. Francis have attained his end. Willing to undergo everything in a great cause himself, he infused a like spirit into his followers. Attendance upon lepers was required of all who joined his order. The self-sacrifice involved was the more striking because the new missionaries were not selected from the lower ranks of society, but from the well-educated and refined. A sound body and a good understanding, with some amount of learning, were insisted on as indispensable requisites for admission; a bastard, a bondman, and a man in debt were equally ineligible. Yet, whatever property a man had he must absolutely renounce in order to be a disciple of St. Francis. Henceforth he was to possess nothing in the world but the coarse robe and mantle about him, and, in some cases, shoes. For his support, he was to beg his bread from door to door. In this rigid poverty not even books were allowed—not even a psalter or a breviary to aid his devotions. And so strictly was the rule observed that Roger Bacon, in the succeeding age, told the Pope he could not put the results of his researches in writing without a special dispensation from his Holiness to allow him ink and parchment.

Debarred thus from literature and literary pur-
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suits, the Franciscan set himself more devotedly to the work of tending the sick. This practical duty, however, gave a new turn to thought, and led him to study the remedial powers of nature. The very casting aside of books, and, with books, of the subtleties of philosophy and logic as studied at the universities, threw him on the teaching of nature itself and caused him to examine experimentally the healing qualities of the different kinds of herbs. Systematic researches paved the way for true physical science ; physical studies paved the way for metaphysical, and the very men who had begun by renouncing the learning of the age became themselves the greatest promoters of learning. From their ranks arose the great schoolmen and the philosophers of the succeeding age.

In thus briefly tracing the origin and history of the Franciscans, we have merely followed and condensed what has been far more ably written of them by the Rev. J. S. Brewer, in the preface to his valuable collection of documents relating to the order, entitled *Monumenta Franciscana*. We shall now be indebted to the body of the same work for a few pictures of these friars, and how they lived at the time of their first settlement in this country. First among the contents of the book is a treatise by Thomas of Eccleston, "on the coming of the Minorites into England," a very simple, unadorned narrative of the history of that settlement. The Franciscan order, it should be mentioned, were at first called Friars Minors, or

Minorites, a name that was intended to impress upon them the duties of humility, and to show the essential character of their vocation. They were to be the "Lesser Brethren" of all whom it was in their power to benefit. In after times, however, they were more commonly called after their founder, Franciscans, and in England, from the colour of their habit they were commonly known as the Grey Friars, just as the Dominicans were known as the Black.

Thomas of Eccleston would seem to have been one of the second generation of English Grey Friars, who had known and had much intercourse with the original members of the order. He tells us that he had been induced by the marvellous things related of other orders to collect the accounts which his fosterfathers and brethren among the Franciscans had related to him of his own during a period of five and twenty years. His work is divided into fourteen chapters, of which the first is the account of the first arrival of Friars Minors in England in 1224, the same year that the rule of their founder St. Francis was confirmed by Pope Honorius III. In that year four clerks and five lay brethren of the order landed at Dover on Tuesday, 10th September. Their names and some little personal description of each are given in the narrative. Their superior was Brother Agnellus of Pisa, whom St. Francis himself had appointed to be provincial minister in England. The other three clerks were Englishmen born, the third, by name William de

Esseby, being still a novice and young in years. Of him it is related, as an example of the obedient spirit so strongly inculcated among the brethren, that being asked by the provincial minister of France if he wished to go into England, he replied that he did not know; and when the minister was surprised at this answer, he explained to him that the reason he did not know was because his will was not his own; whatever the English provincial determined about it, he himself would wish. He was a man of remarkable gentleness and suavity, who, says the author, “led into the way of salvation many fitting persons of various ranks, ages, and conditions; and he proved to the eyes of many that the blessed Jesus knew how to do wonders and by locusts to conquer giants.” *

The brethren were taken across the Channel for charity by the monks of Fécamp, in Normandy. On reaching Canterbury they were entertained two days by the monks at the priory of Holy Trinity; and then four went on to London, while the five others turned to the priests' hospital and remained there till they had provided a place for themselves.

“A small chamber in a school-house was granted to them, where they sat, as it were, shut up from day to day. But when the scholars returned home in the evening they entered the house in which they sat, and there made themselves a fire and sat about it; and sometimes when they were going to have a little supper, they set upon the fire a little pot with

* An allusion to Numbers xiii. 33. The *locustæ* of the Vulgate are “grasshoppers” in our version.

the dregs of beer, and put a dish upon the pot and drank all round ; and they each said some word of edification. And by the testimony of one who was a partaker of this simple fare, and made himself the companion and sharer of their poverty, the beer was at times so thick that when the dishes were to be heated they poured in water, and so drank with joy. The like also happened frequently at Salisbury, where the brethren at supper time drank mere dregs about the kitchen fire with so much joy and hilarity that any one esteemed himself happy who succeeded in snatching them from another in a friendly fashion."

The strictness with which they followed the rule of poverty in those days was such that they would scarcely contract a debt even for their extreme necessities. When Brother Agnellus, the provincial minister of the order, visiting the warden of their house at London, desired to hear from the friars there how much they had spent within one term, he was so shocked even at a very moderate expenditure, that he threw away their rolls and tallies, and striking himself in the face, declared that from thenceforth he would never audit any account whatever. It is also recorded that at one of their houses, two strange brethren having arrived weary and footsore, the house hardly knew how to entertain them, as they had not a drop of beer. On a consultation among the seniors, the warden determined to borrow a pot of beer, but it was agreed that the brethren of the convent should not drink themselves, but only pretend to drink along with the strangers "propter caritatem." "In the convent at London," adds the writer, "I have seen the friars

drink such sour beer that some would prefer water, and eat bread which the people call a twist (*torta*), and even when bread failed they would persistently eat other things in the presence of the minister and guests."

The four friars who, leaving their brethren at Canterbury, went on to London and founded the first settlement in the metropolis, were entertained for a fortnight by the already established community of Black Friars. They then took a house in Cornhill and made cells in it, filling up the interstices with grass. They remained till the following summer without a chapel, not having yet obtained a faculty to erect altars and celebrate the mass. Before many weeks were over, two of the four started for Oxford, where again the Black Friars gave them a kindly reception for eight days, till they hired a house in the suburbs, in the parish of St. Ebb's. After the community there had received some accessions they sent forth an offshoot to Northampton, and in the same way new communities were founded at Lincoln, Cambridge, and other towns. Within thirty-two years from their first arrival in England the number of Grey Friars throughout the country had reached 1242, and the number of their houses was forty-nine.

It must not be supposed, however, that the first devotees who gave themselves up to this life of poverty and hardship were spared, even in that age, more than such men would be in our day, a severe conflict with social prejudice. Brother Solomon,

one of the earliest novices, who was afterwards warden of the London house, was appointed to collect alms for the brethren, and went to the house of his own sister with that object. She brought him bread, but turned away her face exclaiming, "Cursed be the hour in which I ever saw thee!" It was the first of Brother Solomon's trials. He used to endure such cold in procuring faggots, or meal and salt, or figs for a sick brother, that he thought he should have died; and the brethren not having other means to warm him, gathered round and pressed him to their bosoms "as is the manner of pigs," says our author. He was ordained as an acolyte by Archbishop Stephen Langton, dined at the archbishop's table, and returned home along with one of his seniors barefooted through deep snow. The result was that he was lamed in one foot, and could not stir for two years. Friar Jordan, the superior of the Dominicans, visited him in his infirmity, and said to him, "Brother, be not ashamed if the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ draw thee to him by the foot." His case grew so bad that the surgeons advised amputation, an operation which was then performed with an axe; but when the instrument was brought and the foot uncovered matter issued from the sore, which gave some hope of amendment. He was sent abroad to visit the shrine of some foreign saint, and in time recovered so completely as to officiate at the altar and walk without a stick. But afterwards he broke his spine, became humpbacked, and was afflicted

with dropsy till his death. On the day before he died he suffered an agony to which all his preceding pains seemed as nothing ; but calling on three of his more special friends to pray for him he had a vision of Jesus Christ and St. Peter, in which our Lord assured him of the forgiveness of his sins, and his anguish at once departed.

Of visions and the like it is only right to expect somewhat in these narratives, and our author goes on to recount several others, of which the first will be thought rather too much in keeping with the squalor and filth with which the life of the friars forced them to make acquaintance :—

“ It is worthy of memory that when the brethren were in their place at Cornhill, the Devil came visibly, and said to Brother Gilbert de Vyz, when he was sitting alone, ‘ You think you have escaped me ? There, take that,’ and threw upon him a handful of lice, and vanished.”

Our author then goes on to speak of their holiness of life, their cheerfulness, and their assiduity, in daily journeying barefooted to schools of theology, in spite of cold and mud, till they became competent preachers. He then relates how, in the first provincial chapter, at London, the whole of England was divided into wardenries, and, in connection with this part of their history, gives rather an amusing story. He first tells how, at Oxford, in the wardenship of Friar Peter, the brethren used no pillows. And he adds :—

“ Neither did the friars wear shoes unless they were sick or ill, and then by special permission. It happened, more-

over, that Friar Walter de Madeley, of happy memory, found two shoes, and when he went to matins put them on. He stood at matins accordingly, as it appeared to himself, in better condition than usual. But afterwards, when he went to bed, and was resting, it appeared to him that he had to go through a dangerous pass between Oxford and Gloucester, Boysalym (?), where there are usually robbers, and when he was going down into a deep valley they ran up to him on each side of the way, shouting, 'Kill him ! kill him !' Over-powered with dread, he said he was a Friar Minor ; but they said, 'You lie, for you do not walk barefooted.' He, believing himself to be, as usual, unshod, said, 'Yes, I do walk barefooted,' and when he boldly put forth his foot, he found himself before them shod with those shoes ; and in his excessive confusion he immediately awoke from sleep, and pitched the shoes into the middle of the yard."

The author then shows how some difficulties arose about the observance of their rule in the matter of building, from the increased popularity of the order causing a demand for increased accommodation ; after which he speaks of the erection of schools by Brother Agnellus at Oxford, in which he persuaded the celebrated Bishop Grosseteste, of Lincoln, to deliver the first lectures. The author himself was a student in these schools. There were also readers at Cambridge belonging to the order, of whom he has a word to say. Several of the friars, who did not preach, were, nevertheless, authorized to hear confessions, and Brother Solomon, of London, was the general confessor, both of the citizens and of the court. Two chapters of the book are devoted to the history of the successive general and provincial ministers of

the order. With all their holiness we find that the brethren were not without dissensions among themselves, and that Brother Elias was deposed from the office of minister-general after a sharp and bitter discussion before the Pope. It seems that he had never professed the rule of the order, laid down in the Pope's bull, about not receiving money, yet his adherents had succeeded in turning out his predecessor, and getting him elected. In the chapter on the provincial ministers we have some pleasant anecdotes like the following of Friar Albertus of Pisa :—

“ In the aforesaid collation Friar Albertus told a parable against the presumption of young men, saying that there was a certain bull who diverted himself in the meadows and fields just as he would, and when, one day, about prime or terce, he turned aside to the ploughing, and saw that the old oxen paced leisurely along the furrow, and had ploughed very little, he blamed them, and said he would have done as much at a start. And they begged him to help them. And when he was placed in the yoke, he ran with too great force to the middle of the furrow, and, being weary and out of breath, he looked round, and said, ‘ What! is it not all done?’ And the old oxen answered, ‘ Not yet,’ and laughed at him. Then the bull said he could go no further. They, on the other hand, told him that they went more slowly for that very reason, because they had to work continually, and not only for a time.”

Friar Albertus is described as a strict enough disciplinarian, who ordered silence to be invariably observed at table, except when they had Dominicans or friars of other provinces for their guests.

He also desired that the friars would wear old coats over new ones, both for the sake of humility and for economy in wear. At the same time, he did not encourage needless austerities calculated to injure the health :—

“ He compelled Friar Eustace de Merc to eat fish contrary to his custom, saying that the order lost many good persons by their indiscretion. He said also that when he was staying with St. Francis in a certain hospital, the saint compelled him to double the daily portion of food that he had been used to eat. He was also so liberal that he gravely rebuked a certain warden, and likewise a Dominican, because they had not provided more abundantly for the convent after labour at a certain solemnity.”

Thus St. Francis himself, it will be seen, though he laid down a rule of severe self-denial, did not imitate the spirit of the later monastic orders in submitting the body to unnecessary constraint. Except on ordinary vigils and fasts, he allowed his followers to eat flesh or other food as they pleased, saying, that the body was made for the soul, and ought to be allowed no cause to complain that its wants were unattended to. In like manner it is recorded by Eccleston of Bishop Grosseteste, who was a special friend of the Franciscans, that “ he enjoined on a certain melancholy friar that he should drink a cupful of the best wine for penance, and when he had drunk it up, though most unwillingly, he said to him, ‘ Dearest brother, if you had frequently such penance, you would certainly have a better-ordered conscience.’ ”

With this we may take leave of Thomas of Eccleston's very interesting little treatise, one of the very few contributions to historical literature that came from the friars. From what has been already said, it will not be thought wonderful that their writings were rare; but it is all the more valuable that we have in this case the record of a social movement of first-rate importance, which could not have been adequately described, except by one of those who took part in it.

There were other orders of friars besides the Black and the Grey, but these were the most important. Next to them were the Carmelites, or White Friars, and the Augustinians, or Austin Friars, who, with the former two, made up what were continually spoken of as the Four Orders. Thus it is said of the friar in Chaucer—

“In alle the Ordres Foure is noon that can
So moche of daliaunce and fair language.”

The Carmelites, driven from their original abode at Mount Carmel, in Palestine, settled in the different countries of Europe, and came to England in 1240. The Austin Friars arrived in England about ten years later.

The influence of all these new orders on the thought of the time was marked and extraordinary. Indeed, it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that during the latter half of the thirteenth century the friars were the only thinkers. In theology, physics, and metaphysics, they reigned su-

preme; and though for centuries their works have been little read, the names of some of their great thinkers are familiar to us still.

The Dominican order, instituted for the express purpose of cultivating the art of preaching with a view to the conversion of heretics, naturally was the first to produce great theologians and scholars. It was incumbent on them, in the pursuit of the very object for which they were instituted, to popularize their philosophy as much as possible. Theology was in that day a thing confined to the universities, where it had become a trite, conventional study. The whole science had been so systematized in the preceding century by the Master of the Sentences, as he was called, Peter Lombard, the disciple of Abelard, that the teachers believed they had nothing to do but to read from what was, indeed, a complete body of divinity. But extracts from the *Book of the Sentences*, exhibiting the opinions of the Fathers upon obscure and knotty points of theology, were not likely to make a satisfactory impression on the minds of those to whom St. Dominic and his followers addressed themselves. It was essential that they should grapple with the heresies of the time, and meet them in the language of the time. The Dominicans accordingly addressed themselves to the study and teaching of divinity with a thoroughness which had not been seen before. Following the methods of Aristotle, whose study was now in the ascendant in spite of papal efforts to brand it as pagan and provocative

of heresy, they soon arrived at a complete and exhaustive philosophy of things both divine and human. Albertus Magnus, the German philosopher, drew up what was in effect an encyclopædia of all the sciences; but the man whose name chiefly resounded throughout Christendom—"the Angelical Doctor," as he was called in the schools—the brightest ornament of his own age, and the leader of a great school of thought for many a generation after him, was the Italian, Thomas Aquinas, with his *Summa Theologicæ*, or complete body and essence of divinity. He it was who was deemed to have made the citadel of orthodoxy logically impregnable, discussing every question by turns, from the elementary one of the existence of God Himself, and stating with a force and clearness equal to that of the rationalists themselves every possible objection that could be taken to the truth as it was maintained by the Church Catholic.

Thomas Aquinas died in 1274; and that same year the crown of England was placed on the head of Edward I. by a Dominican friar, named Robert Kilwardby, who had been promoted the year before to the archbishopric of Canterbury. This fact is in itself remarkably suggestive of the very high estimation in which the order was held, and the influence it had gained in less than sixty years after its first institution. But in those sixty years the intellectual achievements of the order had reached their climax; and its greatness now began

to wane. Kilwardby himself was a very voluminous writer, but his fame did not even approach that of "the Angelical Doctor," and not one of his numerous treatises has yet found its way into print. Indeed, there is scarcely a single English Dominican whose literary productions can be expected to have much attraction for the modern reader. The systematic studies of the order were not of such a character as to awaken much sympathy in after ages. Yet there are two English Dominicans who deserve a passing notice here as labourers in the field of history.

The first is Nicholas Trivet, the author of a valuable set of annals, extending from the reign of Stephen to the death of Edward I. He was the son of Thomas Trivet, one of the justices in eyre in the reign of Henry III., and had joined the brotherhood of the Dominicans even in early youth. Afterwards he studied at Oxford, and also at Paris. He alludes to his studies at the latter university in his preface to the annals above mentioned; and it appears that when there, he devoted much attention to the history of the French and the Normans, making careful extracts of anything he met with relating to that of his own country. The result of these researches, as well as of further study, was embodied in his *Annales Sex Regum Anglie*; and as evidence of a systematic intellectual training, too seldom applied to the study of historical events, it is of peculiar interest. In clearness of narrative, and

distinctness of statement it exhibits a marked advance upon the ordinary chronicles of the time. The language, too, is polished and elegant, as is commonly the case when a writer makes accuracy and precision his chief aim. The record of each year is headed by a title, showing first the year of our Lord, and then in parallel columns that of the reigning Pope, and of the emperor, and of the French and English kings respectively, as follows:—

D. N. J. C.	P.	ROMANORUM.	R.	FRANCORUM.	ANGLORUM.
MCXXXVI.		Innocentii II. 6.	Lotharii IV. 10.	Lodovici VI. 27.	Stephani 10.

This work constituted one of the original authorities for the reign of Edward I., being for that period a contemporary history; and as such we may allude to it hereafter.

Trivet also wrote a general chronicle of the world from Adam to the Incarnation, and another in French, from the Creation to the thirteenth year of Edward II., which he dedicated to the Princess Mary, daughter of Edward I. But these works still remain in manuscript, and have little interest, even for the historian.

The other Dominican writer to whom we have alluded, is Dr. Thomas Stubbs, the author of a history of the archbishops of York, written to vindicate the rights of that see against the primacy of Canterbury. It begins with the first archbishop, Paulinus, and is carried down to the fourty-fourth,

John Thuresby, who died in 1373. It appears that Stubbs also wrote an account of the illustrious men of his own order, and some treatises on church law and morals which have never been printed. He is by no means so interesting a writer as Trivet, nor indeed so valuable.

The intellectual history of the Franciscan order differs greatly from that of the Dominicans as the work to which they applied themselves was different. We have seen already that St. Francis did not encourage literature, or even allow the possession of books by his followers, who accordingly found occupation for their minds in the study of nature. The result was a race of physical philosophers, unrivalled for the extent of their researches, and for their penetrating judgment of things. They were not, however, mere material philosophers, but from the first bestowed much pains upon theology; and from the contemplation of God and nature they gradually extended their investigations over the whole field of human thought. They also attracted to themselves, in some instances, men who had already distinguished themselves in such studies. This was the case with our countryman, Alexander of Hales, surnamed "the Irrefragable Doctor" (every one of the great Schoolmen had his peculiar epithet), who gave lectures at Paris, and became the teacher of another great Franciscan schoolman, the Italian Bonaventura, second in fame as a philosopher and theologian only to his fellow-countryman Aquinas.

Bonaventura was called by his disciples "the Seraphic Doctor." His life was pure and beautiful, his insight clear, and undimmed by passion. Of some of his works it was said by Gerson, two centuries later, that he had been reading them for thirty years, and yet had scarcely attained to a first taste of their sweets, which always presented to him something fresh and delightful whenever he recurred to them. Mr. Maurice* has analysed a treatise of his, concerning "the reduction of arts under theology," which contains a number of very beautiful thoughts, touching the different kinds of light, external and internal, which come down, according to St. James's saying, from the Father of lights in Heaven. It is light, according to Bonaventura's view, which is the source of all good gifts.

The name of "the Illuminated Doctor," however, was reserved for another great foreign scholar of this order, Raymond Lully, a native of Majorca, whose personal history, varied and full of adventure, is perhaps, of all biographies of the period, the most characteristic of the times. A soldier, a poet, and a libertine at the beginning of his career, at the age of thirty he was conscience-smitten. Influenced by visions, he renounced his lawless life, gave all his goods to the poor, and became a follower of St. Francis. His mind at the same time appears to have been occupied with the thought of a new moral philosophy, which was to

* *Mediaeval Philosophy*, 215-222 (Ed. 1870).

rescue sinners like himself, turn the heretic to orthodoxy, and convert the heathen. With this view he learned Arabic from a Saracen slave whom he had bought for the very purpose ; and having filled his mind with Arabian philosophy, produced a much-admired treatise, called by himself *Ars Lulliana*, and by his followers *The Great Art*, which was intended to simplify the acquisition of truth by a methodical classification of ideas. Not content, however, with announcing the theory, he eagerly sought leave to bring it to a practical trial. He visited Rome, Paris, and Genoa, trying in vain to impress upon the Pope and others, the importance of establishing institutions for teaching Arabic, and sending missionaries to the Mahometans. Then, unable to influence others, he himself sailed three times into Africa, exposing himself to the greatest hardships and dangers in his zeal to convert the Moslems. And after his third attempt he died on the passage home from the sufferings that he had endured.

The zeal of English Franciscans was more tempered by discretion ; yet an element akin to romance is traceable in some of the anecdotes of their early history also. Thus the circumstances attending the entrance of two illustrious Englishmen into the order are related by Eccleston as follows :--

“ Master Adam of Oxford, who was famous throughout the world, had made a vow that he would grant any request that should be preferred to him in the name of the Blessed

Mary ; and he told this to a certain recluse who was a friend of his. She revealed the secret to her friends ; that is, to a monk of Reading, to another of the Cistercian order, and to a friar preacher, telling them that they could gain such a man in such a way ; not wishing that Adam should become a Friar Minor. But the Blessed Virgin did not permit any one in his presence to make the needful request, but deferred it to another time. One night he had a dream that he had to cross a bridge, where some men were throwing their nets into the stream, endeavouring to catch him ; that he escaped them with difficulty, and reached a peaceful spot. Now when, by the divine will, he had escaped all others, he went casually to visit the friars, and during the conversation, William de Colville, the elder, a man of great sanctity, said among other things to Adam, 'My dear master, enter our order for the love of the Mother of God, and help our simplicity.' And Adam immediately consented to do so, as if he had heard the words from the lips of the Mother of God. He was at that time the attendant on Master Adam de Marisco, wore his livery, and wisely induced him, by the grace of God, not long after to enter the order. Now it seemed to Adam de Marisco that on a certain night he and his companion were going to visit a certain castle, and outside the gates there was a crucifix painted, and whoever wished to enter must first kiss the cross. Friar Adam of Oxford entered first, having kissed the cross, and immediately afterwards the other Friar Adam followed, doing the same. But the former, on finding the staircase, ascended with so much rapidity, that he was soon out of the sight of his companion, who followed him and cried aloud, 'More slowly ! More slowly !' But the other was seen no more. The meaning of this vision was soon after manifested to all the brethren in England ; for Friar Adam, after his admission visited Pepe Gregory [IX], and obtaining the pope's assent to preach to the Saracens, died before his companion at Barlete. But Adam de Marisco entered at Worcester, through zeal of greater poverty.'

The popularity of the Franciscans in England was greater than in any other country, and among the distinguished men of the order the great majority were Englishmen. Besides the two English schoolmen already named, Adam de Marisco and Alexander of Hales, it is enough to mention Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Occam. No greater names than these shine in the intellectual firmament of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries ; and though with regard to Scotus, Scotland and Ireland contest with England the honour of having given him birth, there is no doubt that England may claim him as her own in a more essential point by virtue of his Oxford education. Of Roger Bacon, the greatest of mediæval experimentalists, it is unnecessary to say much. His was a mind that could break through the bondage of mere authority and raise up for itself a complete fabric of science in almost every department of human knowledge. But with science we are not here concerned. Duns Scotus was "the Subtle Doctor" of the schools, who dared to dispute the doctrines of Aquinas and drew to Oxford, it was said, thirty thousand students to hear his lectures. From Oxford he was called to Paris, where his fame still increased, and he was afterwards sent to found a new university at Cologne, where the citizens went forth to meet him at his approach and carried him into their city in a triumphal car. At Paris he maintained in a public disputation the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and brought over the whole university to

his view, which he defended by elaborate arguments against two hundred objections. But his greatness as a thinker is chiefly shown in the fact that for centuries after him scholastic minds were divided into the two rival sects of the Scotists and the Thomists according as they favoured his philosophy or that of Thomas Aquinas.

William Occam is said to have been the pupil of Scotus, but he differed from his master in his doctrine of "universals"—that is to say, of general terms, such as man, horse, or the like, used to indicate genus or species. Scotus was what was called a realist,—he considered abstractions to be realities, holding that the idea of a horse, or of any other species of object, was a real thing which existed before any individual horse or object of the kind was ever formed; while Occam revived the old philosophy of the nominalists, who considered that generic names like this were names and nothing more. More important, however, and certainly more interesting to the modern reader, was the part Occam took in argument against the Pope's interference with the dominion of temporal princes, which formed the great question of the day. Pope John XXII. was the object of his special invectives, whom he charged with introducing new opinions and heresies. It was a bold thing, of course, to denounce the Pope himself as a heretic; but Occam did so and maintained that a heretical pope might be tried by a general council whose decrees it would be the duty of the emperor to enforce against him.

Nearly a century later these views were acted upon by the council of Constance which deposed another Pope John ; but Occam had to take refuge from the Pope John of his day, and put himself under the protection of the duke of Bavaria. He died at Munich in 1347.

The philosophy of Occam exercised undoubtedly a very great influence on the age which succeeded him. He was "the Invincible Doctor," whose arguments it was in vain to contest ; and to him was largely due that growing spirit of resistance to papal supremacy which was exhibited among the nations of Europe, and most of all in England, from the days of Wycliffe to the Reformation. It was natural enough that the key-note of that resistance should have been first sounded by a Franciscan friar, who having himself, like the rest of his order, abjured the possession of property, looked upon the wealth of the Church as an abuse, and desired to see the administration of temporal things placed entirely in the hands of temporal princes. It was the friars of the Middle Ages, and not Wycliffe, who really were the first to shake the dominion of the Pope of Rome. It was they who, pointing to apostolic poverty, suggested how Christianity might be relieved of everything that was superfluous and reduced once more to its essential principles. In another age, indeed, they grew corrupt and Wycliffe took up the theme that they had dropped, showing no small dislike to the successors

of the men who had urged it before ; but the spirit of the great revolution which shook Europe in the sixteenth century lives unmistakably in the writings of Occam, who died two hundred years before Luther had made himself conspicuous.





CHAPTER VI.

THE ST. ALBANS HISTORIANS AND LATER MONASTIC CHRONICLES.

Diminution in the number of monastic chronicles—Compensated at first by minuteness of detail—Position of St. Albans as a centre of news—First formation of the scriptorium at St. Alban's—Roger of Wendover—Plan of his chronicle—His account of the papal interdict—Matthew Paris—His character as an historian—Extracts from his chronicle—William Rishanger—Trivet's account of Edward I. transcribed by him—Other continuators of Matthew Paris—Thomas Walsingham—His account of Wat Tyler's rebellion—Whethamstede's Register—End of the age of monastic chronicles—Higden's *Polychronicon*—Trevisa—Caxton.

IT was not to be expected that the friars could leave behind them anything like the voluminous and careful histories which monastic chroniclers have bequeathed to us. Of all pursuits in the world, there is none which demands seclusion and study so much as the writing of history ; and, on the whole, the life of a friar was not one of seclusion. While the monk was shut up within his cell, having at his command a valuable library, with which, and with the aid of borrowed books, he could frame new histories of times gone by, the

friar was abroad in the world, preaching, and begging, and tending the sick. Such time as he could afford to give to study at all was commonly devoted to the congenial subjects of theology and physics; there was little inducement to spend it in the investigation of past events. His library, even after the brethren were allowed to have books at all, was in all probability a scanty one, compiled by the labour of his own fraternity, with little or no aid from the archives of older institutions. Hence the brief and scanty chronicles which these men possessed were commonly to a great extent original, and were often mainly devoted to the history of their own respective orders.

Indeed, the new stimulus given to thought in other directions by the labours of the friars and the schoolmen was in itself no small bar to the writing of history; and soon after this we note a considerable falling off in the number of contemporary chronicles, even of monastic origin. It is seldom found that a great advance in science and scientific modes of thinking is accompanied by an increased study of the records of past times. On the contrary, it is precisely these things which most excite the mind to speculation, and draw it furthest away from those sober records which possess a human interest to more unsophisticated natures. A prospective imagination, whether bent on discovering the philosopher's stone, or on verifying some new theory of life, cannot easily train itself to look back, and see if there is any wisdom to be learned

from the experience of our forefathers in matters of every-day concern. But in the end the scientific stimulus reaches history as well as other subjects, and historical literature, too, bears the impress of deeper and more careful thought.

So it was in those Middle Ages. Even in the thirteenth century the number of monastic chronicles had very considerably diminished, and it went on diminishing still further for fully two hundred years, when at length these compositions ceased entirely and their place was supplied by writings of another kind. But the diminution in the number of contemporary histories was at first largely compensated by improvement in quality and copiousness ; and perhaps no reign in English history, till we come to the age of newspapers, has been more minutely chronicled than that of Henry III.

It is to the writings of certain monks of St. Alban's that we owe almost all our knowledge of that very eventful period ; and the fact that the great history of the time was composed within one of the largest of English monasteries, is in itself suggestive of the new conditions under which history was now written. That the monasteries were the great repositories of historical learning had been for ages undisputed ; but it now appeared that the resources of the largest establishments could alone furnish satisfactory materials for the composition of new histories. Moreover, there was an advantage in being near the centre of affairs ; St. Albans was not a very long day's ride from

London, was frequently honoured by visits from royalty, and was generally in communication with the court. One of those admirable highways left to us by the Romans, stretching out into the centre and north of England, connected the place with the metropolis, so that pilgrims and wayfarers from every quarter received the hospitality of the monks, and brought them news of every thing that could possibly be worth recording. It was known, too, that within the abbey walls a faithful record was continually kept up of all that was heard of doing in the outside world ; and once, as we have remarked already, Matthew Paris, the official chronicler of the house, was called upon by the king himself to witness a solemnity and put it upon record for future ages.

Matthew Paris, however, was not the first of those monastic chroniclers whose personal relations with the king and the leading men of the time gave him special facilities for collecting information. William of Malmesbury was intimate with the court of Henry I., and enjoyed the patronage of his son the earl of Gloucester. After him, too, there had been no lack of historical writers familiar with the court, but it is doubtful whether any of them belonged to the monastic order. Henry of Huntingdon certainly did not, and neither did Giraldus Cambrensis. Roger of Hoveden was one of King Richard's clerks, was sent by him on confidential messages between England and the continent, and held a commission at one time as justice,

to hold pleas of the forest in Northumberland. But all this shows that he was a clerical lawyer, not a monk ; and it seems as if, just at this particular period, the art of narrating events was cultivated more largely outside the cloister. Yet the monasteries had never ceased to be the special schools of history ; and it would appear that the court had begun to take note of the fact in a way it had not done before.

It might even be surmised from the language of Matthew Paris that he was occasionally admitted to the king's council chamber on some such footing as reporters for the press are now to the House of Commons. At least, in the year 1236 he is careful to tell us not only of a number of new laws approved in council for the benefit of the realm, but also of one proposed enactment which was discussed, and which the king would not agree to. The whole tenor of the different ordinances carried on this occasion is so minutely recorded, together with the substance of the rejected measure, that it is clear the report must be regarded as in some sense an official one. A great monastery was, in fact, from one point of view a treasure-house, in which the king himself and his council may have thought it advantageous to deposit important documents, or have them transcribed and interwoven with a narrative of current history. That this was actually the way in which Henry III. considered it, is more, perhaps, than we are quite warranted in asserting as a fact : but there is no doubt at all, from what

Matthew Paris himself tells us, that he sometimes admitted the monastic historian to friendly intercourse, and even deigned to dispute with him concerning affairs of state. Nor does it appear that this great honour made the writer at all subservient. On the contrary, he rebuked the king sometimes to his face, and recorded the rebuke afterwards in the pages of his chronicle.

Facts like these undoubtedly indicate a man of great personal weight and independence of judgment. Yet it is probable that the official position of the writer was at that time one of very considerable influence and power. For the St. Alban's school of historians had already acquired a very high celebrity ; and Matthew Paris himself, in the work to which we have alluded—for he was the author of several others—was only the continuator of a history begun before his day within the walls of the same abbey. It is therefore fitting, before further reference to his labours, that we should bestow a few words upon those of his predecessors.

It appears from ancient records long preserved within the abbey itself that the original formation of a scriptorium there was the work of Abbot Paul, a Norman, related to Archbishop Lanfranc ; that two parts of the tithes of Hatfield were given for its endowment by a Norman nobleman, who was lord of that manor ; and that the abbot had at first to hire scribes from other places, Lanfranc supplying them with manuscripts to copy. Succeeding abbots made various contributions of books, among

which we hear of a missal bound in gold, and other volumes of a similar character with golden illuminations. Towards the close of the next century, one Walter, who filled the offices of librarian and precentor, is believed to have compiled a chronicle of English affairs ending with the death of King Stephen; and this work must have been adapted and added to by Roger of Wendover, who succeeded him as historiographer of the monastery. On the death of Roger of Wendover, again, *his* work was in like manner made use of by Matthew Paris as the foundation of a larger and more extensive chronicle carried down to later times. But the chronicle of monk Walter no longer exists as a separate composition; whereas the work of Roger of Wendover is still extant in its original form, as well as the larger chronicle in which it was incorporated by Matthew Paris.

The reader will, doubtless, remember one interesting extract which we have made from Wendover's chronicle already, giving an account of the interviews St. Francis held with the Pope to induce him to confirm his rule. From this alone some estimate may be formed of the writer's power in dealing with telling incidents. Roger of Wendover liked a good story occasionally, and told it well. But originality does not appear to have been his aim. He only selected from the best authors what seemed most valuable and interesting to put on record. For this reason he entitled his work *Flowers of History*; and in his introduction he

tells us why. “That which follows,” he says, “has been taken from the books of Catholic writers worthy of credit, just as flowers of various colours are gathered from various fields, to the end that the very variety, noted in the diversity of the colours, may be grateful to the various minds of the readers, and, by presenting some which each may relish, may suffice for the profit and entertainment of all.”

It was therefore not for what he wrote from his own knowledge, but for what he borrowed from other sources that Wendover chiefly claimed attention to his work ; and though the judgment of the modern historian as to its value is certainly very different, we must by no means overlook the plan of the work itself. It is divided into two books, the first of which is devoted to ancient history from the beginning of the world to the Incarnation, derived partly from the Old Testament and partly from more modern writers, among whom was Geoffrey of Monmouth. The second is a compendium of modern history commencing at the Christian era, in the form of annals carried down to the author’s own time. Not a single year is passed by without notice ; and as the preface to this part of the work informs us, it gives an account of all the popes and emperors of Rome, of various bishops, kings, and princes in different parts of the world, and of their acts both good and evil. But as the narrative comes down to more modern times, it is almost exclusively occupied with English

history, and the events in which England was very largely concerned. It becomes also much more full and elaborate ; and from the beginning of King John's reign it may be regarded as an original work. At the end of the year 1235, the authorship is shown by a note which says, "Thus far extend the *Chronicles of Master Roger de Wendover.*"

It appears that this author was at one time precentor of St. Alban's Abbey, and was afterwards appointed prior of the cell of Belvoir belonging to that community, but being accused of extravagance in his administration he was deposed and recalled to St. Alban's. This is supposed to have been about the year 1231. His chronicle, or at all events the latter part of it, must have been composed during the next five years, and apparently the later events must have been written down almost immediately after they occurred ; for he died on the 6th May, 1236, and his narrative comes to an end at the close of the year preceding. As an historian he is lucid and impartial. It is from him we derive most of the information we possess about the reign of King John ; and the straightforward simplicity with which he tells the tale, denouncing wickedness and injustice where necessary, without invective or high colouring of any kind, is greatly commended by his editor, Mr. Coxe. As a specimen of this quiet style we may give an extract relating to one of the most interesting events of the reign, the Papal Interdict :—

"King John had now for nearly two years, as has been said before, unceasingly continued throughout England, on account of the interdict, a most severe persecution against the clergy as well as some of the laity, and had entirely destroyed all kind of hope in every one of any improvement or satisfaction, and Pope Innocent could no longer put off the punishment of his rebellion. Wherefore, by the advice of his cardinals, he, in order to cut up by the root such an insult to the Church, gave orders to the bishops of London, Ely, and Winchester, to declare the said king excommunicated by name, and solemnly to publish this sentence every Sunday and feastday in all conventional churches throughout England, that thus the king might be more strictly shunned by every one. But after the aforesaid bishops had, by the apostolic authority, entrusted the publication of this sentence to their fellow bishops who had remained in England, and to the other prelates of the Church; they all, through fear of or regard for the king, became like dumb dogs not daring to bark, wherefore they put off fulfilling the duty enjoined on them by the apostolic mandate, and failed to proceed according to the usual course of justice. Nevertheless, in a short time the decree became known to all in the roads and streets, and even in the places of assembly of the people it afforded a subject of secret conversation to all. Amongst others, as Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, was one day sitting in the exchequer at Westminster, attending to the king's business, he began to talk privately with his companions who sat with him, of the decree which was sent forth against the king, and said that it was not safe for beneficed persons to remain any longer in their allegiance to an excommunicated king; after saying which he went to his own house without asking the king's permission. This event coming soon after to the knowledge of the king, he was not a little annoyed, and sent William Talbot, a knight, with some soldiers, to seize the archdeacon, and they, after he was taken, bound him in chains and threw him into prison. After he had been there a few days, by command of the said king, a cap of lead was

put on him, and at length, being overcome by want of food as well as by the weight of the leaden cap, he departed to the Lord."

From a story like this recorded by a contemporary pen we can realize better than by any other means by what influence a despotic king was most effectually held in check in the beginning of the thirteenth century. As yet the voice of public opinion in England itself was weak and had to be supported by the public opinion of Christian Europe uttered by the head of Christendom ; nor was it by any means easy, even thus, to bring a tyrant to account. But the wickedness and cruelty of King John were surely working out a remedy which all his wiliness could not ultimately withstand. The Church, and the barons, and a foreign enemy besides, would all have combined against him with irresistible force ; and though by his abject submission to the papacy he succeeded in dividing their powers and turning his most formidable opponent into a friend, he had still to reckon with the Church at home united with the barons in demanding *Magna Charta*.

The chronicle of Roger de Wendover was transcribed, with some additions, by Matthew Paris, who continued it from the year 1235, where his predecessor left off. The name of this new writer, properly Matthew of Paris, (*Matthæus Parisiensis*), has been supposed to imply that he was either born or educated at the French capital ; but so little is known of his personal history that this is little

more than conjecture. The name of Paris is found as an English patronymic in the thirteenth century. Moreover, although our earliest friars came from abroad, and even the English members of those orders had often studied at that famous centre of European scholarship, I believe that the inmates of a monastery were commonly natives of the adjoining district, and had seldom received the advantages of a foreign training. But Matthew Paris was certainly a very exceptional monk, and his peculiar qualities as an historian may well be supposed due to an exceptional education. His remarkable fluency of style, accompanied as it is by a breadth of view and a comprehension of foreign affairs rarely found in the untravelled Englishman of that day, to which may be added the fact that he was acquainted with French, and some evidence in his writings of apparent familiarity with the French capital, go far to justify the speculation. At the same time there is an evident endeavour in the work which we are now considering to continue it on the lines laid down by his predecessor, and confine it for the most part to matters connected with the history of England. All his other writings, moreover, are equally limited in their scope. His pen is recognized in biographies of the two Offas, kings of Mercia, (the elder Offa was a mythical personage, but they were both believed to have been founders of St. Alban's) and of the first twenty-three abbots of the monastery, from its original foundation to the author's own day. So

that it would seem, after all, that his affections were entirely English and local unless we suppose that they were governed by a sense of duty to the establishment to which he belonged.

All we really know about him, however, is that he made his profession as a monk of St. Alban's on the 21st January, 1217, and that nineteen years afterwards, that is to say in 1236, he was appointed to succeed Wendover as chronographer to the abbey, in which capacity he must have been busily occupied till his death, or at least for about seventeen years, with one remarkable interruption. In 1248 he was sent by the Pope on a special mission to the monks of Holm, in Norway, but returned after an absence of eighteen months and resumed his duties in the abbey. His death must have occurred between the years 1253 and 1259.

It is generally believed that besides being an accomplished penman he was also a skilful artist and illuminator of manuscripts, and moreover that he was a notable worker in gold and silver and other metals. Indeed there is very little doubt that some of his works of art survive, especially drawings in manuscripts ; but the attempt to identify them seems to be very hazardous and has led to some controversy in our day. Among other things he is considered, though even this seems doubtful, to have been the author of three curious drawings of an elephant sent to England by Lewis IX. in 1255, as a present to king Henry III. These are remarkable enough in their way as showing the

strong impression which the creature's dark, massive form had made upon the imagination of the artist ; and though they may scarcely satisfy the critical eye of a generation familiar with the Zoological Gardens, they must have been regarded as very special treasures at a time when the animal was so rarely seen in the West of Europe. If they were really the work of Matthew's pencil they display a vigour of execution not unworthy of their author.

But whatever may have been the merits of Matthew Paris as an artist, it cannot be said that he greatly studies artistic effect in writing. His narrative is plain, straightforward, and lucid, with here and there a little bit of graphic description, but it contains nothing that is highly coloured or introduced as a mere embellishment. The whole interest of the history arises simply out of the facts themselves and the truthfulness with which they are depicted. The writer was far too much interested in what he had to tell to adorn it with mere-tricious graces. He was a politician who felt the moral significance of all that took place in his day, whether in England, at Rome, or in the distant East ; and he expresses his judgment without the least reserve, alike on the acts of his own sovereign, of his countrymen, and of the court of Rome. He is, in fact, the most distinctly political historian with whom we have yet had to do. He has, no doubt, his feelings as a monk, resenting the presumption, in some cases, of these new orders of friars, though

even here his complaints seem very fair. But his thoughts rise altogether above mere class and party considerations. He is not so much a monk as an English politician, and yet not English exclusively, but cosmopolitan. His merits, even in his own day, as a man of great judgment and impartiality seem to have been renowned over Europe, for it was at the request of the monks of Holm, in Norway, that he was sent thither by the Pope to restore discipline in the monastery and secure it against the usurpations of the Archbishop of Drontheim.

But it is, of course, as an English politician that he is most interesting to ourselves ; and especially so, considering the period at which he wrote. The progress of the great constitutional struggle between the days of *Magna Charta* and the beginning of our parliamentary system is a subject which stood in special need of illustration from such a clear-sighted and impartial spectator. As yet, it must be remembered, there are no commons to vote supplies ; the king is at the mercy of his barons, even in money matters. He has inherited a kingdom reduced and weakened by his father's misconduct,—a kingdom at one time subjected to the Pope, at another too much under the sway of foreigners. He himself, having been a minor at his accession remained long in tutelage, and was unable when he came of age to assert any real independence. His marriage is resented as increasing the influence of foreigners ; all that he does is con-

trolled and sharply criticised ; he is driven hither and thither by varying counsels and despised by those on whose aid he is dependent. In this state of matters we can appreciate a passage like the following :—

“ In the year of our Lord 1237, which was the twentieth of the reign of King Henry the Third, he held his court, at Christmas, at Winchester, whence he forthwith sent royal warrants throughout all the English territories, ordering all nobles belonging to the kingdom of England, namely, arch-bishops, bishops, abbots, installed priors, earls and barons, all to assemble without fail in the octaves of the Epiphany at London, to arrange the royal business and matters concerning the whole kingdom. The nobles, on hearing this, immediately obeyed the king’s summons, and accordingly, on the day of St. Hilary, a countless multitude of nobles, namely, the whole community of the kingdom, came to London, and proceeded to the royal palace at Westminster to hear the king’s pleasure. When they had all taken their seats, there stood up in the midst of them one William de Kaele, a clerk and familiar of the king’s, a discreet man, and well skilled in the laws of the land, who, acting as a sort of mediator between the king and the nobles, disclosed to them the king’s pleasure and intentions. ‘ My lord the king,’ he said, ‘ informs you that, whatsoever he may have done heretofore, he now and henceforth will, without hesitation, submit himself to the advice of all of you, as his faithful and natural subjects. But those men who have till now, in the management of his affairs, been in charge of his treasury, have rendered him an incorrect account of the moneys received by them, and owing to this the king is now destitute of money, without which any king is indeed desolate ; he, therefore, humbly demands assistance from you in money, on the understanding that the money which may be raised by your good will shall be kept to be expended for the necessary uses of the kingdom, at the discretion of any of

you elected for the purpose.' When the assembled nobles heard this speech, they each and all, not expecting anything of this sort, murmured greatly, and—

Alter in alterius jactantes lumina vultus.

[Each hearer, lost in dire amaze,
Turned on his neighbour's face his gaze.]

And they said to one another—

Fuderunt partum montes : en ridiculus mus.

[The labouring mountains shook the earth,
And to a paltry mouse gave birth.]

They then replied with indignation that they were oppressed on all sides, so often promising and paying, now the twentieth, now the thirtieth, and now the fiftieth part of their property, and they declared that it would be unworthy of them, and injurious to them, to allow a king so easily led away, who had never repelled or even frightened one of the enemies of the kingdom, even the least of them, and who had never increased his territories, but rather lessened them, and placed them under foreign yoke, to extort so much money so often, and by so many arguments, from his natural subjects, as if they were slaves of the lowest condition, to their injury and for the benefit of foreigners. When the king heard this, he wished to calm the general discontent, and promised on oath that he would never again provoke or annoy the nobles of the kingdom by injuring them in that way, provided that the thirtieth part of all movable property in England was granted and paid to him for his present use ; because the large sum of money which he had, a little while before, sent to the emperor (as he stated) for the marriage of his sister, and also what he had spent at his own marriage, had, in a great degree, exhausted his money. To this they openly replied, that he, the king, had done all this without the advice of his liege subjects, and they ought not to share the punishment, as they were innocent of the crime. They, however, withdrew to a private place to consult about obeying the king's demand, and supplying his necessities, and to

discuss the kind and quantity of assistance which was demanded. As they were withdrawing for this purpose, Gilbert Bassett said to the king, in the hearing of all, and with less circumspection of speech than he ought, 'My lord king, send some one of your friends to be present at the conference of your barons.' He was when he said this, sitting on one side of the king, with only a few persons between them ; and, in reply to his speech, Richard Percy, who had been at the conference of the nobles, and was, not without cause, angry at it, said, 'What is it, friend Gilbert, that you said ? Are we, too, foreigners, and are we not amongst the number of the king's friends?' And Gilbert felt himself rebuked by this unpleasant and sudden speech. And thus, by a multiplicity of arguments, the conference was protracted for four days."

At another time we find the king's demand of money at a council or parliament of his nobles, so strenuously resisted that he has recourse to craft to attain his end :—

" He ordered them to wait till the following day to hear his wishes concerning this and other matters ; and on the morrow he summoned them one by one, at different times, into his private chamber, like a priest summoning penitents to confession, and, as he could not weaken their determination when all together, he cunningly endeavoured to weaken them one by one by his arguments, and begged pecuniary aid from them, saying, ' See what such an abbot has given to aid me, and what such another has given me,' holding out at the same time a list, on which he showed a written agreement that such and such an abbot or prior had given so much, or had, at least, promised to give so much, although none of them had given their consent thereto, nor even knew anything of it. By such false precedents and ensnaring words, the king cunningly entrapped a great many ; many others, however, stood firm, and would not in any way swerve

from the reply they had agreed on in common, and had sworn to abide by. To these the king angrily said, ‘ Shall I, then, be a perjured man? I have sworn an inviolable oath that I would cross the sea, and, with extended arm, demand restitution of my rights from the French king, and this I cannot in any way effect without a large sum of money, which your liberality ought to supply.’”

It is a wretched condition, certainly, into which the crown of England has fallen. But Europe has fallen into a wretched condition, too. The horrid Tartars have made irruptions as far as Hungary and the shores of the Baltic. Dreadful reports are spread abroad of the Emperor Frederick II., which Matthew Paris can hardly bring himself to believe. It is said that he has been a long time in alliance with the Saracens; that he keeps a harem of Saracen women; that he utters blasphemies about the Eucharist, and speaks of Moses, Jesus, and Mahomet, in the same breath, as three conjurers who had bewitched the world. The crusading spirit has gone out, and the Pope now sells absolution from crusading vows through the medium of mendicant friars. The experiment is even pushed a little further; and the same friars first preach remission of sins to all who assume the cross for the liberation of the Holy Land, and a few days after absolve the very men whom they have prevailed upon to do so. The Pope practises extortion, levying contributions on religious houses in England by much the same arts as the king employs with his barons. He also promises the

Roman people English benefices for their sons and relatives on condition of their aiding him against the emperor. Such are a few of the indications of general demoralisation depicted in the pages of our chronicler.

Yet there is a real revival of the old crusading spirit under the king's brother Richard, Earl of Cornwall, afterwards King of the Romans, who, in spite of a positive prohibition from the Pope, sails from France into the East, and is able to send home from Palestine good news of his success. For he has made a treaty with the Sultan of Egypt by which Jerusalem, with a large tract of territory besides, is handed over to the Christians ; and the monks of St. Alban's remember with pride that before starting on his expedition he visited their monastery, and desired the benefit of their prayers, while the foreign ecclesiastics, sent from Rome to collect money in England, regarded his zeal with cold indifference. On his return he is received with joy by the emperor, who had married his sister. Games and festivities of various kinds are held in his honour, among which displays he is particularly attracted by the performances of two handsome Saracen girls, who glided along the floor, each on a pair of rolling balls. "They walked backwards and forwards," says the chronicler, "clapping their hands, moving at pleasure on these revolving globes, gesticulating with their arms, singing various tunes, and twisting their bodies according to the tune, beating cymbals or castanets

together with their hands, and putting their bodies into various amusing postures, affording, with the other jugglers, an admirable spectacle to the lookers-on." The French king shows even higher respect for the deliverer of the Holy Land by allowing him to negotiate a truce for Henry III. at a time when, owing to the king's indiscretion, the English army was in danger of being all taken prisoners. Only at Rome was Earl Richard received with coldness when he went thither from the emperor's court to plead the cause of his brother-in-law.

Of facts like these Matthew Paris appreciates the significance, after the fashion of a modern Englishman, rather than a monk. To us in the present day, who perhaps have visited the continent ourselves, and who are accustomed every morning to read disquisitions on the affairs of other countries, as well as of our own, it seems natural enough to take a deep interest in the state of Europe generally. But no other monk before the days of Matthew Paris, and no other writer for a long time after him, shows such a clear appreciation of the intimate connection between the history of his own country and that of other nations. His foreign intelligence, moreover, is remarkably good. His vivid description of the Tartars, whose irruptions spread so much consternation over Europe is scarcely inferior to that of Gibbon. "These people," he says, "have very large heads, by no means proportionate to their bodies, and feed on

raw flesh, and even on human beings ; they are incomparable archers, and cross any rivers in portable boats made of hides ; of robust strength and large in their bodies, impious and inexorable men ; and their language is unknown to all within reach of our knowledge. They abound in flocks, herds, and breeds of horses ; the horses are very swift, and able to perform a journey of three days in one ; the men are well armed in front, but not behind, that they may not take to flight ; and their chief is a most ferocious man, named the Khan." In the year 1238, when they threatened Gothland and Friesland we are told that the people of those countries did not, as usual, send to Yarmouth for herring, and that commodity consequently became a drug in the market. One slight drawback, however, in this chronicle in point of literary art is that the writer occasionally repeats himself a little ; and this is the case to some extent in his account of the Tartars, to whose doings he is obliged to return more than once in the course of his narrative.

Meanwhile, amid all the disorders of the times, we see how England was gradually making her way towards a fixed constitution. The king's repeated applications to the nobles for money require some check to be administered. In 1244, they are convoked in council, and meet in the refectory of Westminster Abbey, where the king in person urges the great expenses he has incurred in an expedition to Gascony, undertaken, as he alleges, by their advice. He says nothing of an intended

expedition against Scotland, as to which, apparently, their advice was not desired. After the nobles had left the refectory, the bishops, abbots, and priors took counsel together in a place by themselves, and afterwards asked the earls and barons if they would agree to their advice in giving an answer. The latter replied that they would do nothing except by joint consent of all. Four bishops, four earls, and four barons were then appointed as delegates for the different orders of the peerage, whose determination was to be binding on the whole body. It was accordingly agreed first to demand the redemption of some old pledges, and the appointment of a justiciary and a chancellor, as serious abuses had grown up for want of such officials. The king, to avoid the appearance of acting on compulsion, refused the petition, but promised some amendment of the matters complained of, and desired the council to meet again at a later date. The nobles then declared that if the king would elect such councillors as they should approve, and would permit his expenditure to be controlled by the twelve delegates, they were willing to grant supplies. The answer was unacceptable. The king endeavoured to temporize, and, to win over the clergy to his will, showed a brief that he had procured from the Pope, not without a handsome *douceur* to his Holiness in reward for so great a favour, requiring them to make a liberal contribution to his necessities. When the bishops met together to consider the Pope's letter, the king

sent to them Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester (who at this time acted with him), and some other of his friends, to urge their compliance ; after which he came himself to protest that their honour was as dear to him as his own, and that he expected his would be dear to them likewise. But they only persisted in the reply that they would consider the matter ; and after he had left them, Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, made answer to those who were in favour of concession, “ Let us not be divided from the common counsel ; for it is written, if we be divided, we shall all die forthwith.”

Matthew Paris did not live to record the result of this long struggle between the king and his barons, which, it is well known, culminated in civil war some years later. It seems a little uncertain when he laid down the pen. The history which he began was continued by other hands to the death of Henry III., and there is no satisfactory evidence of the place at which a change of authorship first took place. We only know that it could not have been later than the year 1259. Matthew's own original intention had been to stop at the end of 1250, the year of Jubilee, where he distinctly winds up the narrative with a few Latin rhymes, intimating that the time required rest, and that he will not inquire what things the coming age may bring forth. It is absolutely certain, however, that he resumed his functions of historiographer, and continued the work to at least as late a date as the year 1259, as in this portion of the narrative he

twice speaks of himself by name; nor is there any very perceptible change of style till we reach the year 1259. But, to judge from internal evidence, the work at that date must have been for some time discontinued, and when it was resumed by another pen, the inmates of the monastery must have forgotten how far Matthew Paris had proceeded with it before his death. For in the year above mentioned, we meet with a remarkable rubric which, though it might read as if it had been inserted by a still later transcriber, is in all probability the work of the continuator himself, written in a spirit of humility as the preface to his own labours. "It is to be understood," says the note in question, "that thus far the venerable man, brother Matthew of Paris, is the writer, and though the handwriting may vary, yet, as the same style of composition is preserved throughout, the whole is ascribed to him. But what is hereafter added is to be attributed to another brother, who, presuming to take in hand hereafter unworthily to continue the work of so great a predecessor, although he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoe, has not deserved to have his name inscribed upon the page."

The writer's name, however, is generally believed to have been William Rishanger, who was also the author of an independent chronicle of the war between Henry III. and his barons. This opinion has not passed altogether without question; for although it is admitted on all hands that William

Rishanger was one of the long line of writers who continued the *St. Alban's Chronicles*, there is no very distinct evidence that he was the immediate successor of Matthew Paris. We have a memorandum written by himself, in which he calls himself "Cronigraphus," or a writer of chronicles, very precisely dated on the day of the Invention of the Holy Cross, A.D. 1312, the fifth year of King Edward II. ; and at that date he says that he had been forty-one years a monk, and was sixty-two years old. It follows that he was born in the year 1250 ; and if he was the first monk of St. Alban's who took up the pen where Matthew Paris left off, the writing of chronicles in that house must certainly have been for a long time discontinued. Yet it is not at all incredible that Rishanger had to go back to a time when he was only nine years of age. A period of civil war had intervened, which spread alarm even within the seclusion of St. Alban's Abbey ; and, as we have seen, the rubric of the anonymous continuator (whoever he may have been) greatly favours the supposition that the writing of chronicles had been suspended for a very considerable time.

Moreover, it is certain, from the separate treatise written by Rishanger on the war between Henry III. and his barons, which bears his name at the commencement, that he actually had bestowed a good deal of thought and study on the history of the very momentous events which had taken place in England in his youth. And it is rather strongly

suggested, by the language he uses at the commencement, that the work of writing annals and investigating historical facts had fallen a good deal into disrepute in his day. So that from this circumstance also we may quite well believe that the task of continuing the chronicle of Matthew Paris had been left till his time in abeyance. The following are the words with which he introduces the subject of this treatise :—

“ It has grown a custom, not to be commended, with very many who care little about written chronicles, to despise books of history, and acts of princes, and, treating those who study them with derision, they regard them all as frivolities and falsehoods. For whom it is expedient to incline their ears, not without shame, to wholesome admonition, that they may take care to put a check upon their scurrility, lest, if by chance they censure too severely the simplicity of others, unmindful of their own frailty, they be found guilty of denying what is true, especially when we see such things declared to the knowledge of many persons by holy and catholic men. And if any one refuses to submit to this admonition, of what great rebuke is he deserving ! Let him hear what is written :— ‘ Whatever is most wholesome, whatever commends thee most to God, and excites thee to greatest devotion, meditate the same, and put it in practice, and study always to follow and embrace it.’ For that meditation is blessed which is followed by fruitful contrition of heart, directing the mind’s eye to the light of celestial contemplation ; which commonly takes place when it is remembered how all the nobility and power of mortals passes away with a momentary vanity. For it happens not unfrequently that from the remembrance of those who have gone before, the mind of a reader is kindled with the love of the heavenly country. Since, therefore, some of our contemporaries who have devoted much attention to

the investigation of past events are also strengthened in their difficulties when they consider how ancient fathers, like gold tried by the fire, after being proved by various persecutions, have happily passed away hence to the joy above, we, believing that our successors are detained meanwhile with like employment, have thought good to put in writing those wonderful and displeasing events which God has permitted to be stirred up in our time for the chastisement of the English nation, the sins of the people deserving it ; so that, considering how we, with our troubles and our joys alike, have passed away like a shadow, they may not only fear the less those evils which before the consummation of this age will come upon the whole world, according to the Gospel promise, but even rise to meet them joyfully, strengthened by the patience of God."

This chronicle, then, was written a generation later than the events that it records. The writer, who became a monk of St. Alban's in the year 1271, could not certainly have become the official chronicler of the abbey till many years later, though it is possible that he was admitted to that office some time before 1312, the year in which he expressly styles himself "Cronigraphus." The chronicle is, therefore, the work of an old, or, at least, middle-aged man, relating for the benefit of posterity the story of what had happened in England in the days of his own youth. It is, in fact, the most full and complete account of those events which we possess, or rather, would have been, if it had come down to us entire ; but it is fragmentary towards the close, and, by some gross confusion on the part of the scribe (for only one manuscript of the work has come down to us), the matter has

been copied in some places in a wrong order. Still, the story is told with not a little zest, and with great sympathy for the popular hero, Simon de Montfort, of whom the author gives us a very high character. In the course of the narrative, some Latin rhymes are quoted, which, as an expression of the popular feeling on the struggle then going on, I have endeavoured to translate into English verse, of somewhat the same character, as follows :—

“ O mourn and weep, sad England, for, full of heavy woe,
Thou but beholdest miseries which daily bring thee low.
If Christ do not regard thee now, as He is wont to do,
Thy name will be a mockery to every haughty foe.

“ Full many a pledge thy sons have given to keep thee safe
and free,
But now too little they regard the word they swore to thee ;
For some who well could aid thee reck not what thy
dangers be,
And some evade their promise and escape beyond the sea.

“ Hence others have begun to raise contention in the land,
And those take sides who ought to join together, hand in
hand ;
Nor seek they peace and concord, but against each other
band ;
But how to end the things begun they cannot understand.

“ So languishes our common weal, the land is desolate,
And foreigners grow mighty on the ruin of our state.
Our native Englishmen are scorned as men of low estate,
And still must bear with injuries that no tongue dare
relate.

“ The soldier and the churchman both are dumb as any stone ;
The right of speaking freely is for foreigners alone.

Not two among a hundred of us English hold our own,
And all that we attain is grief and shame and bitter moan.

“ O Gloucester’s Earl, it is for thee the noble work to achieve
Which was thine own beginning ; else thou many shalt
deceive.

Go, manfully redeem thy pledge, and let us still believe
The cause which took its source from thee shall strong
support receive.

“ Or if (which God forbid !) thy hand, thou seek now to withdraw,

A traitor to thy own loved land as never England saw,*

* * * * *

“ Earl Simon, too, of Montfort, thou powerful man and brave,
Bring up thy strong battalions thy country now to save.

Be not dismayed by menaces or terror of the grave.

Defend with might the public cause ; naught else thine own
needs crave.

“ And thou, Earl Bigod, keep thy word, and lend a helping
hand,

As thou a doughty soldier art, well fitted to command.

’Tis but a petty rout of dogs in turmoil keeps the land.

Drive out or quell the cursed race with thy victorious band.

“ Great nobles who have pledged your faith, as ye are English
lords,

Keep firmly to your plighted troth, defend it with your
swords.

If aught the land may profit by your counsels and accords,
Let that be done and quickly which ye have ordained in
words.

* The third line of this stanza is lost, having been omitted by the transcriber, so that it is impossible to complete it in translation.

“ If that which ye have now begun ye steadfastly maintain,
The object ye so much desire ye surely may obtain.
Of long deliberation unless an end ye gain,
It truly may be said of you, your labour was in vain.

“ To you the highest honour will redound, when all his o'er,
If, bearing your devices, England freely breathe once
more.
And may God Almighty's mercy from the plague she suffers
sore
Soon redeem our wretched country, and sweet peace to her
restore.”

There is certainly much in common between this undoubted chronicle of Rishanger and the continuation of Matthew Paris during the same period, though the order in which the subjects are treated is a little different. At the same time, each has some things which the other leaves out. And, to refer now to the continuation, we may quote an incident related just after the account of the battle of Lewes, which, as being in itself of mere local interest, may, perhaps, enable us to realize to our imaginations the effect of these miserable dissensions over the whole of England:—

“ At this time, the town of St. Alban's was so carefully fortified, and the gates were so strongly secured with locks and bolts for fear of war, that all access was denied to those who wished to pass through it, especially mounted horsemen. At that time Gregory de Stoke, Constable of Hertford, piqued at the spirit displayed by the people of St. Alban's, boasted that he would enter the town with three attendants, notwithstanding the bolts and bars, and would seize and carry off with him to Hertford four of the better class of townsmen. To carry out his purpose he entered the town and made

foolish excursions everywhere, looking about now this way now that, as if he was going to perpetrate some great thing. At length he said to the lads accompanying him, 'You see how the wind stands?' Presently a certain butcher, thinking he meant to burn the town, said, 'I will teach you how the wind stands,' and gave him a blow on the face with such violence that he fell at his feet upon the ground. The people then seized him and his lads and bound them with iron rings and fetters ; and in the morning their heads were cut off by the butchers, and were fixed upon long stakes and placed at the four ends of the town. But the king, when he heard of it, fined the town a hundred marks, which was immediately paid."

Whether we are right or wrong in our conjecture that the work of Matthew Paris was only continued by Rishanger after a long interval, it is certain, at least, that Rishanger and succeeding writers made the narrative complete, and carried it on without a break-down to the death of Henry V. on the same plan. Through the whole of that period the fullest original account we possess of all that took place in England is to be found in the series of the *St. Alban's Chronicles* : and even if not in all parts written at the date of the events themselves, it is in the form of annals such as those which Matthew Paris, there can be little doubt, wrote down while the news of all that occurred was fresh in the mouths of every one. At the end of each year, also, these writers systematically gave an account of its meteorological and other characteristics, showing whether it had been a good year, or the reverse, for corn and fruits ; whether there had

been violent storms, floods, or famines, and whether there had been any other special causes affecting the general happiness of the people. During the whole period, from the reign of Henry III. to that of Henry V., such an annual register will be found in the *St. Alban's Chronicles*.

How far Rishanger's contribution to this series was an original composition, it is difficult to say; for during the whole reign of Edward I., in which we might expect him to take his place as a contemporary writer, the account of events in the *St. Alban's Chronicles* seems to be borrowed, almost word for word, with the exception of the meteorological register just referred to, from the chronicle of the Dominican Friar, Nicholas Trivet, of which we made some mention in the last chapter. In one place, indeed, where the *St. Alban's* writer abridges the catalogue of the works of Thomas Aquinas, given by Trivet, he expressly refers to that writer's chronicle by name. So that there seems very little doubt that it is the *St. Alban's* writer who has borrowed all along from Trivet, not Trivet from the *St. Alban's* writer. We will therefore take the opportunity in this place of giving the reader a specimen of the style of the pains-taking and accurate Dominican, which we refrained from doing before to avoid chronological confusion. The following is Trivet's personal description of King Edward:—

“Edward, King of the English, the eldestborn of Henry III. by Eleanor, daughter of the Count of Provence, had completed

thirty-three years and five months of his age on the day he was about to succeed * his deceased father in the kingdom. He was a man of proved foresight in the conduct of affairs, devoted to the exercise of arms from his boyhood, by which he acquired for himself in divers regions that fame in which he singularly outshone the princes of all the Christian world in his day. He was of handsome figure, of majestic stature, in which he overtopped ordinary people from the shoulder upwards. His hair in boyhood, from a colour almost silvery, bordering upon yellow, but in youth changing to black, adorned his old age with locks of a swan-like whiteness. His forehead was broad, and the rest of his face likewise, except that the drooping eyelid of his left eye betrayed a resemblance to his father's glance. With a stammering tongue he yet had no lack of eloquence to persuade when there was any occasion for oratory. In proportion to his body his arms were long and supple; there were no arms to match them for nervous vigour and skill in sword fence. His breast was more prominent than his belly, and the length of his thighs when his charger reared and galloped, prevented the rider from ever losing his seat.

When not engaged in warfare he indulged both in hunting and fowling, but especially in the hunting of stags, which he was wont to pursue with swift horses, and to transfix when taken, with a sword instead of a hunting-spear. That he lived under the special protection of the Most High God might be very well known, not merely because when a youth engaged at chess with a certain knight in a chamber with a vaulted roof, he suddenly rose and departed in the middle of the game without any occasion being offered, and a stone of enormous size, which would have crushed him, fell in the very place where he had been sitting; but also from the fortunate issue of various other dangers which he frequently

* It must be remembered that the legal maxim, "The king never dies" did not hold good in those days. The successor of a deceased king was not accounted as actually king till he was crowned.

incurred, as the studious reader may note later on in our narrative. There was in him a noble spirit, impatient of injuries and forgetful of dangers while he sought for vengeance, yet capable of being easily softened by a show of humility. For once, while engaged in hawking near a river, he chid one of his attendants on the other side of the stream for having carelessly allowed a falcon to fly at a duck among some willows ; and on finding, as it seemed, no attention paid to his rebuke, he added threats. The other, perceiving that there was neither bridge nor ford near at hand, replied promptly it was enough for him that the river divided them from each other ; on which the king's son, enraged, plunged into the water without knowing its depth, and swimming his horse, crossed the stream. Then ascending with difficulty a bank, made hollow by the course of the river's channel, he drew his sword and pursued the other, who, having now mounted his horse, was flying before him ; but, despairing of escape, turned back, and, with bared head, put forth his neck and submitted himself to Edward's will. On this the king's son, checked in his fury, replaced his sword in the scabbard, and they both returned in peace to see to the neglected falcon."

After Rishanger the St. Alban's Chronicles were continued by two writers, named John de Trokelowe and Henry de Blaneforde, down to the middle of the reign of Edward II. In that of Edward III. there is not much evidence of the work having been carried on by any contemporary pen within the walls of the abbey. But Thomas Walsingham, who was precentor and "scriptorarius," or principal scribe, at St. Alban's in the reign of Richard II., recast the work of Trokelowe and Blaneforde, with some additions from other sources, and carried it down to his own times. This fact is certain ; but how

far he carried it down in his own time is another question. We know that he lived till at least very near the end of Henry V.'s reign, and that he dedicated to that king, after the conquest of Normandy, a work of very similar character to his English history which he called *Ypodigma Neustriæ*. Moreover, the *English History* itself, which goes by his name, comes down all the way to the death of Henry V., in 1422, and a considerable portion of the later narrative, as far as the year 1419, is word for word the same as in the *Ypodigma*. Yet Mr. Riley, Walsingham's most recent editor, has, strangely enough, found reasons for thinking that the *English History* is not really Walsingham's own composition after the year 1392; and that, although he was an original writer in the time of Richard II., he adopted as his own in the *Ypodigma* the work of some one else who had written a history of current events in the two succeeding reigns.

This is not the place for controversy, but I must simply say that the evidences adduced for this extraordinary opinion seem to me singularly weak. It is quite true that one manuscript of the history terminates in the year 1392, and that after that date the narrative is for some years less full and satisfactory. But a sufficient explanation of this may, I think, be found in the personal history of the author, who was removed from the monastery of St. Alban's in 1394, and made prior of Wymondham in Norfolk. In 1400 he ceased to be prior of

Wymondham, and in all probability returned to St. Alban's, where he would naturally resume those literary labours which had been interrupted by other duties elsewhere. Nor is there anything that I can see of the nature of internal evidence to create a doubt that the writer of the history during the reigns of Henry IV. and Henry V. is the same as the writer of the history in Richard II.'s time. On the contrary, the style is the same throughout.

Walsingham is stated by all writers to have been a native of the county of Norfolk; and his name, in that case, probably indicates the exact place of his birth—Thomas of Walsingham. He appears to have been educated at Oxford, and, in speaking of Wycliffe, laments sadly the favour shown to heresy by his Alma Mater. “How greatly,” he says, “the modern proctors or rulers of that university have degenerated from the prudence or wisdom of their predecessors may be easily conjectured from this—that, on hearing of the cause of the coming of the said papal nuncio” (meaning one who had brought a bull of Gregory XI. against Wycliffe), “they were, for a long time, undecided whether they ought to receive the papal bull with honour, or altogether reject it with disgrace. Oh, general study of Oxford, with what a heavy lapse thou hast fallen from the summit of wisdom and learning! For, whereas thou wast formerly wont to unravel the doubts and perplexities of the whole world, now, darkened by a cloud of ignorance, thou

dost not fear to doubt the things which it does not become any one to doubt, even among lay Christians. I am ashamed to remember such imprudence, and therefore avoid dwelling on this subject, lest I may seem to wound with my teeth those maternal breasts which used to give milk, and nourish with the beverage of knowledge."

Walsingham is a very important writer. It is from him, although a hostile critic, that we learn a great part of what we know about Wycliffe. From him, too, comes most of our information about Wat Tyler's insurrection, about the Wonderful Parliament, and generally speaking about the reigns of Richard II., and of the Fourth and Fifth Henry. In connection with the subject of Wat Tyler's insurrection, he gives us a pretty complete account of the preaching of one whom he very unjustly regards as Wycliffe's true disciple—the incendiary priest, John Balle, who addressed the multitude at Blackheath on the well-known theme:—

“ Whan Adam dalf and Evè span
Wo was thanne a gentilman?”

Although the terror inspired by Tyler's insurrection was greatest in the metropolis, the monastery of St. Alban's had no small share in the alarm. The townsmen, tenants of the abbey in villenage, went up to London to join the revolt, and consult with their fellow-bondmen and Wat Tyler himself how to free themselves from all the restrictions imposed by their special tenure. They returned,

threatening to set fire to the abbey if their demands were not conceded, and the prior and four of the monks whom they specially denounced fled for their lives to their northern cell at Tynemouth. The abbey was besieged by an army of serfs, clamouring for the surrender of certain ancient charters which they had been taught to believe ought to have freed them long ago from bondage. Nothing of the kind existed, but the abbot was obliged to concede to them whatever charters they demanded. They burst into the abbot's parlour and carried away some millstones which had been placed as a pavement at the door in memory of an ancient law-suit gained by the abbey against the town. They broke these stones into fragments, and gave each man a piece, "as blessed bread on Sundays is divided and given in parish churches," says our historian. Thus, every one was able to preserve a memorial that they had taken vengeance in that matter on the monastery. But these things are as nothing to what is recorded of the wild doings in London; how the mob broke into the Tower and beheaded the Archbishop of Canterbury and the lord treasurer, and every one who did not promise to join their party. "I have learned from a trustworthy reporter," says Walsingham, "that thirteen Flemings were violently dragged out of the church of the Austin Friars in London, and beheaded in the public streets; and from another parish church in the same city seventeen; all of whom, without reverence of sanctuary or fear of God (for at the

time that accursed crowd had no respect for man), were murdered by the same process of decapitation." Altogether, the picture drawn of this one great socialistic movement of the Middle Ages is truly most appalling. Nothing more horrible, it may be safely said, has ever taken place on English ground.

In the later portion of Walsingham's chronicle, the principal subject of interest is of course the story of Henry V.'s campaigns in France. But the narrative is more remarkable for fullness of information than for liveliness or vigour of description. For it must be owned Walsingham had very little of the graphic power of his great predecessor, Matthew Paris, though he framed his work on the same model ; nor does he group his facts together in such a masterly way. It is hardly fair, however, to expect military ardour in a monk. Though he followed Henry's progress in France with that interest which it could not fail to excite in every Englishman, there were subjects at home, such as Oldcastle and the Lollards, on which he displays a still greater amount of feeling ; and without sympathising with what he says on these matters we feel that his account of them is even more significant than any description of military achievements could be. For they tell us what was passing in the very hearts of men, not merely what they were doing in the world.

With Walsingham the regular sequence of chronicles in continuation of Matthew Paris comes to an

end. For about thirty years after the death of Henry V. no record of the events of English history seems to have been kept at St. Alban's, or, if kept, has been preserved. But in the year 1451, John Whethamstede, who had already been abbot of St. Alban's once before and resigned the dignity, was again elected abbot, and one of his first acts seems to have been to institute a register of the things done under his second prelacy. This register, when it was commenced, had probably no other object than to record transactions relating to the affairs of the abbey; but it was not long before political events of the highest magnitude were related along with them. For in the year 1455 the fires of civil war, which had long been smouldering, at length burst into a flame, and the first battle between the Red Rose and the White was fought in the streets of St. Alban's under the very walls, one might say, of the monastery. This fact leads the writer to a review of the causes of the war, and from that date to the close of the register in 1461, after the battle of Towton and the attainder of the Lancastrians under Edward IV., there are a number of very valuable notices of the events of that troubled period.

The age of monastic chronicles had now really passed away. Only one composition of the kind—the *Chronicle of Croyland* with its four continuations—went beyond the history of Walsingham and dragged on a fitful existence to the accession of King Henry VII. That, too, is an important

source of history, but mainly for the times of Edward IV. and Richard III. To whatever cause we may attribute the fact—relaxation of discipline, the growth of commerce, or the use of other agencies—monasticism had even now lost considerably its hold upon the world. Amid the political confusions of the times the writing of current history seems to have been forgotten. One part of England, very probably, knew little of what was doing somewhere else, and there were no longer monkish scribes in direct communication with the court, who could not only collect but weigh the value of intelligence from every quarter of the world. Moreover, as to the history of past times, one very celebrated chronicle of which we have yet to speak had so completely superseded all former efforts of the kind that it seemed utterly unnecessary to do more in this respect than multiply copies of the *Polychronicon*.

This was the work of Ralph Higden, a monk in the wealthy abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, who, in the reign of Edward III., formed a grander design of a universal history than the world had yet seen realised. The library of St. Werburgh's was well stocked with books, not only on history but on geography, topography, natural history, and every department of human knowledge. Higden himself was a literary glutton who devoured all kinds of literature, and he laid all the stores of ancient and modern learning under contribution for a complete history of the world. He lived to a good old

age and was able to complete his extraordinary undertaking; but beyond these facts we hardly know anything whatever of his personal history. He was born, it is said, somewhere in the west of England, but in what precise year we have no means of ascertaining. He is believed to have taken monastic vows in or about the year 1299, and according to a note in an early manuscript he died in 1363.* From his own writings it appears that he had travelled so far as to be familiar with Derbyshire, Shropshire, and Lancashire; but there is no satisfactory evidence that he ever visited foreign countries. All the information he possessed about them was derived from books alone.

The title that he gave to his work is explained by himself to mean that it is a history of many periods or ages. It was undertaken at the request of his fellow monks, to whom his comprehensive intellect and his peculiar fitness for the task of an historian must have been well known. He himself had at first proposed to compile from various sources a history of his native country, but he was encouraged to enlarge the scope of the work and make it a universal history. He divided the whole into seven books, after the example, he says, of the First Worker, who made everything in six

* Which probably means 1364 by our modern computation, as the time of year, according to Bale, was about the feast of St. Gregory, *i.e.* about March 12. This point has been overlooked by Professor Babington in his interesting introduction to the *Polychronicon*.

days and rested on the seventh. He also aimed at a more perfect system of chronology, noting the dates of events according to more than one computation of years ; and he points out in an early chapter some of the errors of former systems. He begins by explaining the plan of the work and giving a catalogue of his authorities. He also warns the reader that certainty in historical matters is not always to be looked for, and that he cannot absolutely guarantee the truth of everything he relates. For even the Apostle, he observes, does not say, " Whatsoever things were written are necessarily true," but only " Whatsoever things were written were written for our learning." (Rom. xv. 4) At the same time it would be wrong to reject everything wonderful as if it were on that very account incredible. He will therefore simply reproduce in his own words the information derived from other writers, shielding himself against responsibility by naming the authors he has followed at the head of every chapter ; and any observations of his own that he may think fit to introduce he will distinguish by an initial R.

With these and some other preliminary remarks he begins first an account of the dimensions of the habitable world, derived from Ptolemy and a writer called Priscianus, by which he is led to infer that the circumference of the whole earth is 20,040 miles, giving a diameter of nearly 6500 miles, or more exactly, 6491 ; so that from the centre of the earth to the surface should be 3245 miles and

a fraction of a mile over. And this, if the current belief was true as to the position of hell, must be the distance of that world of woe from the surface of our earth. He then goes on to describe from St. Augustine, Bede, Pliny, and others, the boundaries and extent of Europe, Asia, and Africa, their climates and their populations, the Mediterranean Sea, and the ocean which encircled the world, the different provinces of the earth, and the physical geography of each. In the course of this survey he is led to a disquisition concerning the situation of Paradise, which, following the opinion of the French divine, Petrus Comestor, he considers not to have been submerged with the rest of the world in Noah's flood. In his account of India, along with much fabulous matter about extraordinary dragons and the battles of pygmies and cranes, men with the heads of dogs, and other monsters, he speaks of the institutions of caste and widow-burning. He then devotes a chapter to the wonders of ancient and modern Rome, and another to the institutions of the ancient Romans. Then follows a lengthened description of the countries of modern Europe, their inhabitants, and their principal products. The chapters devoted to this part of the work are of very unequal interest; but as a specimen of the facts contained in them, it is mentioned that Brabant was then famous for the dyeing of wool, which it received from England and transmitted to other countries. Although England produced the best of wools, it had not water suitable

for dyeing. There was, however, a well at London, and a particular place in the river which passed through Lincoln, which enabled the dyers to produce a very beautiful scarlet.

After his account of the different countries on the continent of Europe, and of the islands of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, he devotes four chapters to Ireland, the information in which is derived from Giraldus Cambrensis, one to Scotland, and one to Wales. At last he comes to his own country, and concludes the first of his seven books with twenty-two chapters upon the geography, climate, physical characteristics, and natural wealth of England, its political and ecclesiastical divisions, its original inhabitants, and the language and manners of the natives.

It is unnecessary to describe the other six books at so much length. The really historical part of the work commences with the second, which contains a history of the world, from the Creation to the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The third extends from the Babylonish captivity to the birth of Christ. The fourth ends with the coming of the Saxons into England. The fifth continues the narrative to the invasion of the Danes. The sixth concludes with the Norman Conquest. And the seventh carries down the story to Higden's own time, the middle of the reign of Edward III. But the work is of no great value, even in the latter part, as an original authority, and little reference has been made to it.

by any of our modern historians. Its real interest lies in the view it affords of the historical, geographic, and scientific knowledge of the age in which it appeared. No work was ever so wonderfully popular. No such voluminous, exhaustive, and interesting history, had ever yet been written. It was reproduced certainly by more than a hundred copyists within a century after its publication. It was translated into English by more than one person. An epitome of it issued from Caxton's press as early as 1480. Two years later, Caxton published the work itself in Trevisa's English translation. Another edition appeared in 1483; and later editions still were issued by Wynkyn de Worde and others in the end of the fifteenth and early part of the following century.

John Trevisa, Higden's translator, was a Cornish man, who had studied at Oxford, and was a fellow of Queen's College there. He was vicar of Berkeley, in Gloucestershire, and canon of the collegiate church of Westbury, but whether this was Westbury in Gloucestershire, or the place of the same name in Wiltshire is uncertain. He had travelled in foreign countries; and in a treatise which he wrote on the hot springs of Bath he speaks of having bathed in those of Aix la Chapelles, and Aix in Savoy, the former of which places he calls Akon, and the latter Egges. He seems to have devoted much time to literary pursuits, and translation of good works was his special delight. Among his original writings is a

dialogue on translation between a lord and a clerk, who are to be understood as representing his patron, Lord Berkeley, and himself. Caxton says that he also made a translation of the Bible ; of which no manuscript is known to exist, though one, perhaps, may be at this day in the Vatican at Rome. He translated Occam's celebrated dialogue between a soldier and a clergyman, concerning the limits of papal and imperial power. He also translated a sermon preached by Fitzralph, archbishop of Armagh, at Oxford, in 1357, against the mendicant friars. He dedicated his translation of the *Polychronicon* to his patron, Thomas, Lord Berkeley, whose chaplain he styles himself. It was finished, as he particularly informs us, on Thursday, the 18th day of April, 1387, being the tenth year of Richard II., and "the yere of my lordes age, Sir Thomas, lord of Berkeley, that made me make this translacion, fyve and thyrty." By some strange error, Caxton, who printed the work a century later, misread the date 1387 as 1357, and to make the rest correspond, corrected the tenth year of Richard II. into the thirty-first of Edward III. He was misled, apparently, by the fact that 1357 is the last year mentioned in the narrative ; but the events actually recorded come down as late as 1360. Caxton, however, printed the work, not exactly as he found it, but, as he tells us, "a lytel embelysshed fro th'olde makyng," and added a continuation to the accession of Edward IV. In the course of little more than a century it seems

Trevisa's language had become so antiquated that Caxton felt it necessary to change "the rude and old Englyssh, that is to wete, certayn wordes which in these days be neither usyd ne understanden." It is a curious fact in the history of our language that English of the time of Chaucer had already become to a great extent unintelligible in the days of Edward IV.

It cannot be said that either the work of Trevisa, or the continuation of it by Caxton is of much value or interest now-a-days, except in a philosophical point of view. Even as a translation the former possesses no great merit; for Trevisa was not a man of much scholarship, and he himself makes the very candid confession, "Though I can speke, rede, and understande Latyn, there is moche Latyn in these books of Cronykes that I cannot understande, nether thou, without studyng, avisenment, and lokyng of other bookeſ." This is the more remarkable, as Higden's Latin is really very good, and not by any means difficult of comprehension. If it had been more like the Latin of the mass-book, or the ordinary Latin of the cloister, doubtless Trevisa would have understood it better; but a solitary country clergyman in those days could not be expected to be familiar with classical models, or to have many opportunities for the "lokynge of other books."

We have thus carried the records of the monks, down to the era of printing; and we may note it as a symptom of the decline of the monastic

chronicle that even before that date there seems to have been a large demand for histories written in English instead of Latin. It is a remarkable fact that while so many editions of Trevisa's translation of Higden issued from the press of Caxton and his immediate successors the Latin text of the *Polychronicon* has never to this day been printed in its entirety.* If monkish literature had not already received its death blow, the appearance of the printing press must inevitably have sealed its fate. And yet it perhaps speaks something for the life of monasticism, only sixty years before its final extinction, that the father of English printing was encouraged to set up his press within the precincts of Westminster Abbey. He was, it is true, only the abbot's tenant, living in the almonry outside the abbey gates. When he talks of his works being printed "in the abbey," he only means, within the abbey precincts. But it is highly probable that his labours met with cheerful recognition and encouragement from a community in which the work of the copyist was now plainly superseded. That, indeed, was dreary work at the best, and hosts of clerical errors in some of their productions bear witness how it dulled the brain; so that we need not wonder if the monks at Westminster were tired of it. Apparently even the deciphering of earlier writings was not much

* An edition of the Latin text accompanied by Trevisa's and another old English translation is at this time in process of publication in the Rolls series.

practised among them then, and Caxton's services were sometimes called to help in it. "My lord abbot of Westmynster," he tells us in his preface to the *Eneydos*, "did do shewe to me late certayn evydences wryten in old Englisshe, for to reduce it into our Englisshe now usid."*

Caxton, therefore, may in one point of view be considered the successor of the monastic scribe and copyist. And not only did he multiply by his press the copies of *Trevisa's Higden*; but he also published in the very same year, a chronicle of his own, founded on the old *Chronicle of the Brute*, which he continued to the accession of Edward IV. and the battle of Towton in 1461. The first printer, therefore, at once took the place not only of the monastic scribe but also of the monastic chronicler.

* Quoted by Mr. Blades in *Biography of Caxton*, 74. (ed. 1877.)





CHAPTER VII.

RECORDS OF THE CITY.

The *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*—French *Chronicle of London*—The *Liber Albus*—The *Chronicle of London*—*Gregory's Chronicle*—Account of Jack Cade's rebellion—Adventures of Margaret of Anjou—The *Mayor of Bristol's Kalendar*—Fabian's *Concordance of Histories*—More's *History of Richard III.*—Extract—Shakespeare dramatised More's works—*Harding's Chronicle*—*Hall's Chronicle*—*Polydore Vergil's History*—Grafton's historical works—John Stow—His *Summary*, his *Chronicle*, and his *Survey of London*—Ireland—*Holinshed's Chronicle*—Sources of Shakespeare's historical plays.

IN the record room of the Guildhall of London is an ancient manuscript, known as the *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*. It is a folio volume of very miscellaneous contents, compiled, however, as we may reasonably judge, for the purpose indicated by its title—to preserve a record of the laws, privileges, and liberties of the city. The date of its composition appears to have been at the commencement of the reign of Edward I., when the contents were systematically divided into chapters, with an index prefixed. But the first chapter and three others in the body of the manuscript were left blank by the compiler,

and the space allotted to them was used at a later date for the insertion of other matters. Only two of the chapters properly constitute that book of ancient laws from which the volume derives its name. But among the other matters, are extracts from the English history of William of Malmesbury, and a later *Chronicle** of the mayors and sheriffs of London, with the events which occurred in each mayoralty, from the first year of Richard Cœur de Lion, when the city was incorporated, to the year 1274, where the record ends with an account of the preparations for Edward the First's coronation.

This is the earliest of a number of city chronicles, which continued for centuries to be composed in the same form, or nearly so. They were drawn up in the shape of annals, with the names of the mayor and sheriffs for each year at the head of the record of that year's transactions. This earliest chronicle, however, differs slightly from its successors, in exhibiting only the sheriffs' names at the head of the year, and mentioning the names of the mayor elected in the text. It is devoted also, for the most part, to civic events, which, however, are of course in some cases of considerable political importance. At the commencement, indeed, the record of many years is left blank, and nothing but the names of the sheriffs is given. But in the

* Published by the Camden Society. Edited by Thomas Stapleton, Esq.

reign of Henry III. the annals become of more general interest, owing to the important part taken by the city of London in the struggle between the king and his barons ; and besides a summary of events, a number of royal letters and other documents are quoted in the text.

A French *Chronicle of London*, published like the preceding by the Camden Society,* extends from the forty-fourth year of Henry III., to the seventeenth of Edward III. French was at that time the language of the king's court, and of the courts of law. This chronicle seems to be quite independent of the preceding. It is difficult to say from what sources the earlier part was compiled, in which we find the insults offered by the citizens to Eleanor of Provence, the queen of Henry III., attributed to their resentment of her cruelly having put to death the fair Rosamond ! A slight confusion this between the reign of Henry III., and that of Henry II., each of whom happened to have a queen named Eleanor. Nevertheless, this chronicle seems to have been composed with care, and its statements are generally accurate.

The preservation of such records must have been important to the civic authorities for the protection and maintenance of municipal rights. The city liberties were on various pretences repeatedly seized by King Henry III., and King Edward I., who imprisoned the mayor and other leading citizens, and placed the city under the control of a custos

* Edited by George James Aungier.

or warden. Yet these things were not done without strong remonstrances and appeals to ancient custom. The city had its own officers, its own laws, and its own system of jurisprudence—all parts of an unwritten constitution, founded upon the charters of several kings, beginning with the Conqueror. No complete account of its laws and usages seems to have been compiled till the beginning of the fifteenth century. But the two great pestilences which visited England in the reign of Edward III. suggested strongly the expediency that such a work should be undertaken; for all the old and experienced men were then cut off, and those who succeeded them in the government of the city were often at a loss for want of written directions and precedents how to act. Still the labour was an arduous one, and was long delayed. But at length, in the year 1419, in the third mayoralty of the celebrated Richard Whittington, what is called the *Liber Albus* of the city of London was composed by the town clerk, John Carpenter; and from its pages we derive a very remarkable mass of information, not only as to the rights and liberties of the city, but also as to its ancient social condition and customs. The substance of these revelations is given by Mr. Riley, who edited this volume for the Master of the Rolls, in an introduction of considerable length.

After this we meet with chronicles of the city of London written in English, on the same model as those earlier ones in Latin and in French. One of

these, published by Sir Harris Nicolas in 1827, under the title *The Chronicle of London*, appears to have been compiled in the reign of Henry VI., and afterwards continued to the death of Edward IV. Another *, derived from much the same materials as far as the reign of Richard II., appears to have been the work of William Gregory, skinner, who was made lord mayor in 1451, the year after Jack Cade's rebellion ; but it was continued by another hand, at least half way through the reign of Edward IV., and the only known manuscript of it which we possess, ends abruptly in 1469, in the middle of a sentence, some leaves being lost. Both the part written by Gregory and the continuation are very interesting. We may give as a specimen of the former, a brief extract from the account of Cade's insurrection, of which the writer must have been an eye-witness ; reducing it as far as possible to modern spelling, for the sake of clearness :—

“ And upon the morrow he came with a great host into Southwark, and at the White Hart he took his lodging. And upon the morrow, that was the Friday, against even, they smote asunder the ropes of the drawbridge and fought sore and manly, and many a man was murdered and killed in that conflict, I wot not what to name it for the multitude of riff-raff. And then they entered into the city of London as men that had been half beside their wits ; and in that fury-ness they went, as they said, for the common weal of the realm of England, even straight into a merchant's place y-named Philip Malpas, of London. If it were true as they

* Edited by myself for the Camden Society, in a volume entitled *The Historical Collections of a London Citizen*.

surmised after their doing I remit me to ink and paper.—*Deus scit, et ego non.* But well I wot that every ill beginning most commonly hath an ill ending, and every good beginning hath very good ending (*Proverbium:—Felix principium finem facit esse beatum*). And that Philip Malpas was alderman, and they spoiled him, and bare away much good of his, and in special much money, both of silver and gold, the value of a notable sum, and in special of merchandise, as of tin, wood, madder, and alum, with great quantity of woollen cloth and many rich jewels, with other notable stuff of feather beds, bedding, napery, and many a rich cloth of arras to the value of a notable sum—*Nescio, sed Deus omnia scit.* And in the evening they went with their simple captain to his lodgings. But a *certain* (a few) of his simpler and rude many abode there all the night, weening to them that they had wit and wisdom for to have guided or put in guiding all England, all so soon as they had got the city of London by a mishap of cutting of two sorry cords that now be altered and made two strong chains of iron unto the drawbridge of London. But they had other men with them, as well of London as of their own party ; and by them of one part and of that other part they left nothing unsought, and they searched all that night.

“ And in the morn he came again, that sorry and simple and rebellious captain, with his many. That was Saturday ; and it was also St. Martin’s Day, the dedication of St. Martin in the Vintry, the 4th day of July. And then divers guests were y-summoned at the Guildhall ; and there Robert Horne, being alderman, was arrested and brought into Newgate. And that same day William Crowmer, squire and sheriff of Kent, was beheaded in the field without Aldgate, at the Mile’s end, beside Clopton’s place ; and another man, that was named John Bayle, was beheaded at the White Chapel. And the same day afternoon was beheaded in Cheap, afore the the Standard, Sir James Fynes, being at that time the lord Saye and great treasurer of England ; the which was brought out of the Tower of London unto the Guildhall, and there of divers treasons he was examined, of which he acknowledged

the death of that notable and famous prince, the duke of Gloucester.* And then they brought him unto the Standard, in Cheap, and there he received his jewys (dues?) and his death. And so forth all the three heads that day smitten off were set upon the bridge of London, and the two other heads taken down that stood upon the London Bridge before."

This is not the work of a cultivated author, but it is the writing of a man who has evidently himself witnessed the scenes he describes, and writes from personal knowledge. Equally interesting, in some parts, is the work of the continuator, whose information is generally quite as good, though perhaps he is not quite so frequently an eye-witness. Take, for example, the following account of some of the less known passages in the life of Margaret of Anjou—her adventures after the defeat of her party at the battle of Northampton :—

" And then, the queen hearing this, she voided unto Wales ; but she was met with beside the castle of Malpas ; and a servant of her own, that she had made both yeoman and gentleman, and after appointed for to be in office with her son, the prince, spoiled her and robbed her, and put her so in doubt of her life and son's life also. And then she came to the castle of Hardelowe (Harlech), in Wales ; and she had many great gifts and [was] greatly comforted, for she had need thereof, for she had a full easy many (*i.e.* a very small company) about her, the number of four persons. And most commonly she rode behind a young, poor gentleman of fourteen years' age ; his name was John Combe, y-born at Amesbury, in Wiltshire. And there hence she removed privily unto the Lord Jasper, lord and earl of Pembroke, for she durst not abide in no place that [was] open, but in

* Popularly called "the good duke Humphrey."

private. The cause was that counterfeit tokens were sent unto her as though that they had come from her most dread lord, the king, Harry the Sixth ; but it was not of his sending, neither of [his] doing, but forged things. For they that brought the tokens were of the king's house, and some of the prince's house, and some of her own house, and bade her beware of the tokens, that she gave no credence thereto ; for at the king's departing fro Coventry toward the field of Northampton, he kissed her and blessed the prince, and commanded her that she should not come unto him till that [he] sent a special token unto her that no man knew but the king and she. For the lords would fain [have] had her unto London, for they knew well that all the workings that were done grew by her ; for she was more wittier than the king, and that appeareth by his deeds, etc."

Of city chronicles like these there seem to have been several, both in London and elsewhere, towards the end of the fifteenth century. Bristol, we know, had its chronicle, called the *Mayor of Bristol's Kalendar*,* compiled in the same form as London Chronicles by Robert Ricart, town clerk of Bristol, in the reign of Edward IV. This work was continued by other hands, even to the reign of James I., and desultory entries added as late as the close of the seventeenth century. Almost all of these chronicles, however, are mere dry records of events under the several years, seldom containing anything so interesting as the two extracts we have quoted from Gregory. And so long as the city chronicle adhered to the old form of annals little more was to be expected from it. Although the city had become in the course of centuries

* Edited by Miss Toulmin Smith for the Camden Society.

more and more of a political centre, although the spread of education had lessened the disparity in literary power between monk and layman—yet the decline in the old monastic history was certainly not compensated by an equal gain in the civic chronicle till the Middle Ages had fairly passed away. One work of the kind, however, towards the close of this period, is of wider scope and of somewhat greater literary pretensions than its fellows.

Robert Fabian, alderman of London, a member of the Drapers' company conceived a grander design than a mere collection of city annals. His object was to compose what he called a *Concordance of Histories*, which, though mainly devoted to the affairs of England, had sections entirely occupied with those of France. The work begins with the arrival of Brutus, and is divided into seven parts; but the first four parts are exceedingly brief, and even the fifth, which is longer, only comes down to Cadwallader, and the sixth to the Battle of Hastings; so that the whole history of England and of other countries from William the Conqueror to the days of the Tudors is contained in the seventh part. It was an elaborate work, compiled with very great care, from a great variety of authors, both English and French. Original verses also were inserted in various places, many of them being merely addressed to the Virgin at the beginning or end of a part, but some, like the complaint of King Edward II., having real reference to the history. No one, however, will

greatly commend these as poetry. But in the main he based the part of his narrative devoted to English history upon city annals of an earlier date like those of Gregory, and preserved the same form, heading the record of each year with the names of the mayor and sheriffs of that year.

Of the personal history of Fabyan very little is known, but it is believed he was of a good Essex family, though he himself is said to have been born in London. He was made sheriff of London in 1493, and three years later was appointed one of a deputation from the city to petition the king for redress of certain new impositions levied on English cloth in the Low Countries. In 1497 he was one of those commissioned to keep the city gates in case the Cornish rebels should march on London. In 1502 he resigned his alderman's gown on the pretext of poverty, though he seems to have been in very good circumstances, to avoid taking upon himself the office of mayor. He died on the 28th February, 1513, and his will was proved in July following.

His chronicle was named by himself *The Concordance of Histories*, but was first printed by Pynson, in 1516, with the title *The New Chronicles of England and France*. This first edition is very rare. Many copies, it is said, were burnt by Cardinal Wolsey's order as reflecting on the excessive wealth of the clergy; but the statement is not very well attested. This edition brings down the English history to the battle of Bosworth

in 1485, and the French to the year 1495, with a notice of the death of Henry VII. in 1509 upon a separate leaf. A second edition, printed by Rastell, in 1533, contains the whole reign of Henry VII., which there is some reason to believe, notwithstanding its former omission, is by Fabyan himself. But later editions contained continuations by other hands into the reigns of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth.

Still, the city chronicle had not yet attained any high degree of literary merit ; nor, indeed, did it ever do so while it retained the form of a city chronicle at all. But within a few months after Fabyan's death the great Sir Thomas More, then under-sheriff of London, wrote in Latin and in English a brief history of Richard III.* which, though he left it, after all, a mere unfinished fragment, was adopted and incorporated with their works by all succeeding chroniclers for more than a hundred years, as the only adequate account of that extraordinary usurper. This is, indeed, the fountain-head of a great deal of our information, not exactly about the reign of Richard III., for it is carried little further than his coronation

* It is said to have been written in the year 1513, when More was under-sheriff of London. If the statement means that it was completed in that year, we must understand it according to the old computation by which the year 1513 ended on the 24th March of what we should call the year 1514. For in the beginning of the work More speaks of Thomas, Lord Howard, as "afterwards earl of Surrey," who was so created on the 1st February, 1514, for his services at Flodden Field.

and the murder of the princes, but about the manner in which he paved his way to the throne. The story is told with consummate art, and it must certainly have been owing either to great indifference to his own literary reputation or to the pressure of occupations of a different nature that the author never completed a work of such remarkable merit.

That More's account of this monster in human shape is somewhat highly coloured, might be admitted without prejudice to the literary character of the work. The very characteristics which, in one point of view, are a proof of genius, may sometimes detract from the character of an author as a judicious and impartial historian. And it must be acknowledged that not only does More's *History* contain statements here and there which are not severely accurate, but his exaggerations are occasionally tinged with the superstition of the age to an extent we should hardly have expected in a man of so much wisdom. This will be apparent in the passage we are about to quote, containing a personal portrait of Richard himself. Yet it may be observed, that while the calm judicial mind seeks always to estimate each statement at its proper value, the narrative of a true historian ought undoubtedly to reflect the follies and superstitions of the time quite as much as the mature judgment of the author. Nay, these things are even more important, it may be said, than an absolutely correct view of the facts. More's *History of*

Richard III. is, from this point of view, all the more perfect a work of art because it contains stories of omens and suggestions of monstrous physical combinations not altogether discredited by the author himself, besides imputations of witchcraft put into the mouth of the leading personage at the council table. It is in these touches more than anywhere else that we discern symptoms of the intellectual and moral degradation of an age of civil war, usurpation, and anarchy.

The following is More's picture of the usurper. After a notice of the duke of York his father, and of his two elder brothers Edward IV. and the duke of Clarence, the writer goes on to say—

“Richard, the third son, of whom we now entreat, was in wit and courage equal with either of them ; in body and prowess, far under them both ; little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard favoured of visage, and such as is in states * called warly, in other men otherwise. He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from before his birth ever foward. It is for truth reported that the duchess, his mother, had so much ado in her travail that she could not be delivered of him uncut ; and that he came into the world with the feet forward, as men be borne outward, and (as the fame runneth) also not untoothed ; whether men, of hatred, report above the truth, or else that nature changed her course in his beginning, who in the course of his life many things unnaturally committed. None evil captain was he in the war, as to which his disposition was more metely than for peace. Sundry victories had he, and sometimes overthrows, but never in default of his own person, either of hardiness or of politic order. Free was he called of dispence,

* Men of high position.

and somewhat above his power liberal ; with large gifts he gat him unsteadfast friendship, for which he was fain to pill and spoil in other places, and get him steadfast hatred. He was close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where he inwardly hated, not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill ; dispiteous and cruel, not for evil will alway, but after (? ofter) for ambition, and either for the surety or increase of his estate. Friend and foe was muchwhat indifferent where his advantage grew ; he spared no man's death whose life withstood his purpose."

Such vigorous writing as this naturally gave a new turn to history. The figure of Richard III., in all its moral and physical deformity, was from that time indelibly stamped upon literature ; and so were its dark surroundings of legend, witchcraft, and superstition. No other picture of the man, no other account of his extraordinary usurpation, was known to the reading public. Shakespeare himself could do no more than dramatise what More had depicted so vividly in words. And how entirely Shakespeare followed the guidance of Sir Thomas is evident on the most cursory perusal of the history and the play. Perhaps the best example of this will be found in the celebrated scene in council at the Tower, in which the Protector orders Hastings to be beheaded. Here in the history we have the very same scene in all its details. The lords are first assembled in council, " devising the honourable solemnity of the king's coronation." The Protector comes in among them about nine o'clock, " excusing himself that he had been from them so

long, saying merrily that he had been asleep that day." He compliments the Bishop of Ely on his fine strawberries at Holborn, and requests him to send for some. He then gets the lords into conversation with each other, and praying them to spare him for a little while, leaves the council. He returns with an altered countenance, knitting his brows and biting his lips. He asks "what were they worthy to have that compass the destruction of me, being so near of blood unto the king?" He is answered by Hastings, "who, for the love between them, thought he might be boldest with him." He shows his withered arm, imputing its condition to witchcraft practised by the queen and Jane Shore. Hastings answers with an "if," as in the play, and the catastrophe follows.

Moreover, after recording the execution of Hastings, More goes on to moralize on some tokens of his coming fate, by which he might have taken warning; and the dramatist puts into the mouth of Hastings himself a last utterance regretting that he had not taken note of them. Lord Stanley had dreamed about a boar that had attacked them both till the blood ran about their shoulders—a significant dream, for the boar was King Richard's cognizance. Hastings himself, too, had been rallied by a knight on conversing with a priest that morning on his way to the Tower, the knight saying with a jest, "you have no need of a priest yet," as if to intimate "you shall have soon." Yet at the Tower wharf he met with a pursuivant to whom he

enigmatically boasted of a triumph he was soon to have over his enemies of the queen's kindred when the axe hung over his own head. All these incidents, recounted by More at considerable length, are condensed by Shakespeare into a few lines.

The history of Richard III. was first published in the year 1543, not as a separate work, but as part of a prose continuation to the rhyming chronicle of Harding, by Richard Grafton, an industrious printer and collector of chronicles in the reign of Henry VIII. Grafton afterwards printed it again in his publication of what is commonly called *Hall's Chronicle*, and again in a chronicle known by his own name. But although the debt of the compiler to Sir Thomas More was acknowledged in each of these cases by marginal notes, the language was a good deal altered in parts, and the genuine text was only printed for the first time with More's other English works in 1557. We must now, however, part company with this interesting little fragment, and speak of the works with which it was incorporated.

Hardyng's Chronicle is little more than a literary curiosity. The author, John Hardyng, was a north countryman of good family, who was brought up in the household of Harry Percy, the celebrated Hotspur, and was with him at the battle of Shrewsbury, when he fell in fighting against Henry IV. He afterwards received a pardon for his share in the rebellion, took service under Sir Robert Umfraville, and was made constable of Warkworth Castle,

in Northumberland. He took part in the Agincourt campaign of Henry V., and was sent on a secret mission into Scotland, which was attended with considerable danger. He came back maimed, and composed in limping stanzas a rhyming chronicle of English history, which appears to have been written during the minority of Henry VI. Many years afterwards he re-wrote it for Richard, duke of York, the father of Edward IV., and just after the accession of that king, he presented it to Edward himself. The account he gives of the Agincourt campaign is of some interest, but on the whole the work is of little historical value and still less poetical merit.

Of far greater importance is the chronicle of Edward Hall, a citizen of London in the reign of Henry VIII. The son of a Shropshire gentleman, he himself was born in London, and was sent for his education first to Eton, then to Cambridge, and afterwards, some say, to Oxford. He then entered at Gray's Inn, was called to the bar, became one of the common serjeants, and afterwards one of the under-sheriffs of the city. In 1533, he was appointed summer reader of Gray's Inn, and in 1540, double reader in Lent, and one of the judges of the sheriff's court. He died in 1547, the year of Henry VIII.'s death. Next year his work was printed by Grafton from the manuscript he had left behind him, with a title which described its objects and scope very completely. It was as follows:—

"The union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster and York, being long in continual dissension for the crown of this noble realm ; with all the acts done in both the times of the princes, both of the one lineage and of the other, beginning at the time of King Henry the Fourth, the first author of this division, and so successively proceeding to the reign of the high and prudent prince, King Henry the Eighth, the indubitate flower and very heir of both the said lineages."

From these words we can very well appreciate the feeling to which the work owed its origin. To men of peaceful disposition in the reign of Henry VIII., it was a matter of profound satisfaction that their country had at length been emancipated from the bitterness of a century of internal strife and turmoil. The stories repeated from father to son during all that period of the days in which they lived must have had a mournful fascination,—days of intermittent rebellion, of sudden revolution, of government paralysed at times by popular insurrection. No time was ever more full of stirring incident, pleasing to recall when once the danger was past, but suggestive of anxiety to every one so long as the old cause of trouble remained unabated. After so much stormy weather men were glad of the comparative dulness of the reign of Henry VII., with the promise of peace implied in his marriage ; and when that promise was fulfilled by the accession of his son, he was welcomed with a single-minded loyalty such as no English sovereign had before experienced, and few have experienced since. He was, besides, a

king of many captivating qualities, which, together with the blessing of an undisputed succession rendered him the idol of the multitude, and disposed even good men to shut their eyes, as far as possible, to his vices.

It was certainly so with Edward Hall. Lawyers, perhaps, more than any other class of the community, were anxious to preach the duty of loyal obedience to a sovereign whose hereditary right was clear, and who, with all his faults, invariably paid great deference to the forms of the constitution. Even if he unjustly put away his wife, it was by a legal process ; and if he abolished that papal jurisdiction to which men had been accustomed to appeal from time immemorial as a supreme tribunal in spiritual matters, in that, too, he had plausible reasons for pretending, at least, that the court was not impartial, and that the unbiassed opinions of learned men throughout Christendom favoured a demand which the Roman pontiff evaded rather than refused. So carefully did Henry consider the law in all he did that he bound the whole body of the lawyers of England to his side as special pleaders—all but the great and good Sir Thomas More ; nor would even he have uttered a word in dissent if he might have been allowed to hold his peace. To the rest support of the king's acts and authority in all things seemed only a religious and loyal duty.

Hence arose the somewhat excessive vehemence of Hall's Protestantism, his far too devoted vindi-

cation of Henry VIII.'s proceedings, and his painful want of sympathy with martyrs who suffered for conscience' sake. Nevertheless, as a contemporary account of events in the reign of Henry VIII., his chronicle is in every other respect most admirable. In it we often meet with descriptions most minute and graphic, especially of pageants and processions, which occupied a prominent place in the beginning of the reign. Here, too, we have the only original account of the rising of the 'prentices against aliens on Evil May-day ; of the conferences of Cardinal Wolsey with the mayor and aldermen of London to raise money for the king, and of many other things which, it is clear, are described by an eye-witness. As to the antecedent history from the days of Henry IV., it is carefully compiled from the best available authorities, English, French, and German. The style is clear and vigorous. The narrative never halts, but is highly readable throughout. To the modern reader there may seem a slight redundancy of words, with Latinisms which have long grown out of date ; and now and then the language is a trifle pompous, as in the opening sentences, in which the author sets forth the object of his work :—

“ What mischief hath insurged in realms by intestine division—what depopulation hath ensued in countries by civil dissension—what detestable murder hath been committed in cities by separate factions—and what calamity hath ensued in famous regions by domestical discord and unnatural controversy—Rome hath felt, Italy can testify, France

can bear witness, Beame (Bohemia) can tell, Scotland may write, Denmark can show, and especially this noble realm of England can apparently declare and make demonstration."

But we must remember that the capacities of the English language as a literary medium had as yet been very imperfectly developed. Writing like this was an imitation of classic oratory in which the powers of our vernacular tongue were put to an early trial. It was certainly, in its day, a wonderful example of what might be done in English prose; nor can we refuse to accord it a certain meed of admiration even now. There has certainly been much pompous English since Hall's day without half so much weight of matter.

It is not unlikely that Hall was animated to the task of writing his chronicle by the work of an Italian named Polydore Vergil, then living in England, who had composed in very polished Latin a complete history of the country from the earliest times to the death of Henry VII. Throughout the whole course of Hall's narrative occur passages which are simply translated from Polydore, especially during the reign of Henry VII., in which the one work is little more than an English version of the other. Polydore's history was, in fact, a work that could not but have made a marked impression upon the literary world of that day. It was the first fruit of the revival of letters in the field of English history; and the clearness of the narrative and classic elegance of the diction were alone sufficient to recommend it to every scholar. But it

was also a work of really great research. Originally undertaken at the request of Henry VII., the author had devoted very many years to its composition, and it was finally dedicated to Henry VIII. in 1533. What was more, it exhibited English affairs from quite a new point of view—that of the intelligent and clear-judging foreigner. To the dismay of English antiquaries, Polydore not only reproduced William of Newburgh's strong judgment as to the absurdity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, and the mythical character of Brutus, but backed it up by other arguments of his own from the silence of classical authors and the revelations of Gildas as to the non-existence in his day of any native memorials of the past history of the island; so that the argument really might have seemed absolute and conclusive. Nor was this the only evidence he gave of a vigour of thought and independence of judgment to which the reader of chronicles had for some time been unaccustomed; but throughout the whole narrative it was apparent that he had not only studied all the available original evidences, but that he had duly weighed their value, and formed his own conclusions.

His history, however, was most valuable in the latter portion, in which he treated of the events of his own day, and especially of the affairs of England since he himself had known the country and lived in it. His account of the reign of Henry VII. is the fullest original narrative of the period that we possess; and so little could the native

historian add to its details that Hall, as we have said, in this portion of his chronicle, was content merely to translate it into English without interpolating almost a single word of his own or of matter from any other source.

Polydore Vergil, in fact, was the only contemporary writer who can be said to have given us anything like an adequate history of the reign of Henry VII. at all. That such a task should have been left to a foreigner is remarkable enough ; but the fact is not altogether unaccountable. Not only had the art of writing history in any form ceased to be cultivated as in former days, but the change of times on the accession of the Tudor dynasty must have been a great discouragement to those who would otherwise have undertaken it. The latest of monastic histories—the *Chronicle of Croyland*—ends at the accession of Henry VII. with some lame excuses for not continuing further a record of the acts of living men ; but no such scruples seemed to have troubled former chroniclers or even the same writer in the earlier part of his narrative. There was certainly something in the new condition of things that produced a feeling of constraint ; and the dull intellects of native writers, accustomed only to record external events, which the contentions of feudal nobles and rival dynasties had produced in unwelcome abundance, could not be expected to penetrate the veil of subtle statesmanship, by which a politic and peaceful, but watchful and suspicious king, was putting

an end to the long reign of violence. It required the brain of an Italian to gather the acts of such a reign into a regular narrative, and make their real significance apparent.

Polydore Vergil was a native of the duchy of Urbino. He had been sent to England by the Pope as sub-collector of Peter's Pence under another Italian, Cardinal Hadrian de Castello, in or shortly before the year 1503. He was in holy orders, and made himself so acceptable in the country to which he was sent, that he resolved to make it his home. He was appointed Archdeacon of Wells, and had other English benefices also conferred on him. Besides English history he had written treatises on prodigies, proverbs, inventions, and on moral and theological subjects. He was a friend of the great scholar Erasmus, whom he frequently saw in England, though their friendship seems to have begun in a little soreness on his part, owing to a nearly simultaneous publication by each of a work on Proverbs, in which he at first suspected plagiarism. But it must be owned that, except in a literary point of view, his character does not stand high. In the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign he incurred the displeasure of Cardinal Wolsey, lost his office of sub-collector, and was thrown into the Tower for some libellous insinuations that he had written in letters to Rome. From his place of confinement he wrote to the great cardinal, entreating his mercy in terms the most abject, and blasphemously besought an op-

portunity of paying him adoration "as his God and Saviour." At the Pope's intercession he was liberated; but long after Wolsey's death, when composing an additional book to his history relating to the reign of Henry VIII., he again poured out the venom he had so long suppressed, and assailed the great cardinal's memory with every possible slander.

Richard Grafton, after he had printed *Hall's Chronicle* in 1548, composed an *Abridgement of the Chronicles of England*, which was printed by Tottyl in 1562, and republished two or three times during the next few years. But in this sort of work he had a formidable rival in the famous antiquary Stow, who, in 1565, brought out his *Summary of English Chronicles*; and in the spirit of rivalry he immediately issued an abridgement of his own abridgement, entitled, *A Manual of the Chronicles of England*. This book he dedicated "to the Master and Wardens of the company of the most excellent art and science of Imprinting," hoping, as he avows, that by their patronage it would become the standard work upon the subject, and that they would take such order "that there be no brief abridgment or manuals of chronicles hereafter imprinted but only this little book." Grafton's mind was not a very generous one, and in one edition he sneers at the work of his rival as containing "the memories of superstitious foundations, fables, and lies foolishly *Stowed* together." Nor, it must be owned, did Stow bear these attacks with perfect

equanimity, but retaliated with charges against Grafton, one of which—that of falsifying *Hardyng's Chronicle*—appears to have been founded in ignorance that Hardyng himself had re-written and altered his work.

But that which is called *Grafton's Chronicle* did not appear till the year 1569.* His motive for compiling it is explained by himself, in the dedication to Sir William Cecil. Although many writers had produced works of a kindred nature, no one had yet, in his opinion, published “any full, playne, and meere Englishe historie.” Some were only short annals called abridgments, which showed what was done, but not the manner of doing it. Others mingled foreign affairs with English, to a needless extent. Others, especially by foreigners, had followed unjust and malicious reports in the matter of religion. For Grafton, like Hall, was a very zealous Protestant, and did not think that the history of his country had been written from a sufficiently Protestant point of view. He had been imprisoned in Henry VIII's time, for printing the Bible, and he had suffered a second imprisonment under Mary. He had been the king's printer under Edward VI., and lost his office after that king's death, for having printed a proclamation of Lady Jane Grey, as queen. His work, however, was so far from being “meere Englishe historie,” that it began in the old style with Creation, and the story

* The second volume, which seems to have been completed before the first, bears date 1568.

of Adam and Eve. The reason for this, as he informs the reader, was because this island had the same time of creation as all the rest of the earth. The first volume comes down in seven ages, or parts, to the time of William the Conqueror. And in this first volume even Brutus does not make his appearance earlier than the fourth age, in which he is contemporary with the kings of Israel. The first volume, however, is of comparatively slender dimensions. The second is about eight times its bulk, and its contents are, indeed, much more like "meere Englishe historie." They are compiled from various sources, but from the accession of Henry IV. the work is little more than a reprint of *Hall's Chronicle*, almost word for word, with a continuation to the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. On the whole, though highly esteemed in its own day, it is not a work of very great value to the modern student of history.

The antiquary, John Stow, was born in London, in the parish of St. Michael, Cornhill, in the year 1525. He was eleven years old when Henry VIII. began to suppress the monasteries; and there is little doubt that he was much impressed by the change which then came over the world. "It was," he says, speaking of the religious houses, in his chronicle, "a pitiful thing to hear the lamentation that the people in the country made for them; for there was great hospitality kept among them, and, as it was thought, more than ten thousand persons, masters and servants, had lost their livings by the

putting down of those houses at that time." Nevertheless, he is neither a zealous advocate of the Reformation, like Hall and Grafton, nor a believer in the Pope's authority, but records everything that took place in a very impartial manner. He was doubtless a studious antiquary from a very early period. His father was a member of the Merchant Tailors' company, and he himself is designated a tailor in contemporary documents. But about his fortieth year he gave up his business, and devoted himself entirely to the study of antiquities. He produced a summary of English history, which was published in 1565, and went through numerous editions. But a much more important work was his annals, now commonly spoken of as *Stow's Chronicle*, which first appeared in 1580, and was afterwards considerably enlarged. Two editions of it were published after his death by Edmund Howes, the latter of which, bringing down the history to the year of publication, 1631, is that most commonly referred to.

The industry of Stow was indefatigable. Besides the chronicle, or annals, and the summary above mentioned, he was the author of a very elaborate topographical work, entitled *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*. He also left behind him a vast quantity of manuscript notes and copies from old chronicles in his own hand. He died in 1605, two years after the accession of James I., and, it is melancholy to record, in extreme poverty. After devoting a long life to the investigation of historical

truth, he found himself, in his eightieth year, absolutely reduced to beg his bread. He received letters patent from King James, acknowledging the great services he had done at his own great cost, and with neglect of ordinary means of maintenance, in the publication of "divers necessary books and chronicles;" on which account he was authorised to solicit voluntary contributions for his support, the king setting the example. Such was the reward of his long untiring zeal, and single-minded devotion to historic truth!

The remarkable industry shown by so many different workers at this period in the compilation of chronicles, was undoubtedly due in great part to the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. The ancient storehouses of literature were now destroyed; their treasures, intellectual or other, had been carried off; their ancient chronicles and richly illuminated manuscripts had been confiscated like all their other goods. The records of the monks had thus become the property of the Crown, hereafter to be studied and utilized in the city, not in the country. And though some could not but lament the disturbance, the change was eminently beneficial and suited to the character of the new era, days when learning no longer withdrew itself to the cloister, but frequented the courts of princes and invigorated the life of cities.

But even before the suppression of the monasteries, a considerable amount of interest seems to have been felt regarding their historical manuscripts.

Henry VIII. had commissioned his librarian, John Leland, who was designated the king's antiquary, to travel up and down the country and draw up a topographical account of the whole kingdom and its antiquities. Under this commission, Leland was empowered to examine the libraries of cathedrals, monasteries, and colleges, and to report upon their contents. He spent six years in the work, and the information he collected was very valuable. Besides a great mass of curious notes upon the different localities, he described particularly all the more remarkable manuscripts he met with in the monasteries. His collections, however, remained unprinted till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when some of them were edited by the antiquary, Thomas Hearne. They had, in fact, rather an unfortunate history. Edward VI. committed them to the keeping of Sir John Cheke, who finding himself obliged to leave the country in Mary's reign, gave some volumes to Humphrey Purefoy which are now in the Bodleian library. The rest came to the hands of Lord Paget and Sir William Cecil, secretaries of state; but whether in their keeping or in Cheke's they were so sadly neglected as even for some time to be exposed to the weather.

Early in the reign of Elizabeth, Reginald Wolfe, the queen's printer, by birth a German, had planned the publication of a very magnificent work, which was to contain a universal cosmography, with particular histories of every known nation. He spent

five-and-twenty years in preparing for this grand project, but died before he could give it to the world. Raphael Holinshed whom he had engaged to collect the materials for it, was then applied to by his executors to see the work through the press. The bulk of it, however, alarmed those who were to bear the expense of publication, and it was resolved to limit the design in the first instance to the histories of England, Scotland, and Ireland with a general description of each country prefixed. Accordingly, in the year 1577, there appeared in two thick folio volumes, the first edition of the work called *Holinshed's Chronicle*, containing the three histories and descriptions just mentioned, illustrated by numerous spirited woodcuts. This was three years before *Stow's Chronicle* was published. But the first edition of Holinshed's work is now very rare, and the second edition is that which is commonly referred to. This was published ten years later without woodcuts and with some omissions besides, but with important additions contributed by Stow and several others, who were among the best antiquarians of the time.

Little is known of Raphael Holinshed, the principal author of this work, except that he belonged to a Cheshire family, and that, according to Anthony à Wood, he was educated at one of the universities, and was a minister of God's word. He is also believed to have been, in later life, steward to Thomas Burdet, of Bromcote, in Warwickshire, an employment quite compatible with

that of a clergyman in those days, though the point seems to have raised a difficulty with some critics. He died at Bromcote about three or four years after the first publication of his chronicle, the second edition of which was issued after his death.

His chief assistant in the work was William Harrison, a native of London, who received his education first at Westminster School, under the celebrated divine, Alexander Nowell, and afterwards at Oxford and Cambridge. He was chaplain to William Brooke, Lord Cobham, warden of the Cinque Ports, who presented him to two livings in Essex, and to whom he dedicated his own part of Holinshed's publication, the *Description of Britain* and of England prefixed to the whole. This is a very elaborate account of its topography, inhabitants, languages, manners, laws, and institutions, which, as he informs us, he composed at the request of his friends during one Trinity term when he was compelled to stay in London. The conditions under which he achieved the task would certainly appear to have been very unpropitious; for, as he tells us, he was then parted from his books by a distance of forty miles, and so little had he travelled even in his own country, except in visits to the universities or to Lord Cobham, in Kent, he had never, till recently, gone a forty miles' journey in his life. Nevertheless, by careful study of the valuable manuscripts of Leland (though they had been sadly injured by

wet and weather, and several of the volumes were missing), and by information derived from letters and from personal conversation with friends, he succeeded in producing a treatise altogether unique in its day, and certainiy of no small interest to students of antiquity in later times.

John Hooker, otherwise called Vowell, of Exeter, uncle of "the Judicious Hooker," contributed the history of the conquest of Ireland translated from Giraldus Cambrensis, and some further articles relating to the affairs of that country. Holinshed himself, however, wrote the continuation of Irish history from where Giraldus left off, as far as the year 1509, to which, in the second edition, a further continuation to 1586 was added by Richard Stanihurst, a native of Dublin, who afterwards wrote a Latin history of the country, and a translation of Virgil's *Æneid* into English hexameters.

In the second edition also, the history of Scotland, which Holinshed had brought down to 1571, was continued by Francis Botevile, *alias* Thin, Lancaster herald, a man of great learning and ability; and a number of valuable notes throughout the whole work were contributed by Abraham Fleming, rector of St. Pancras, Soper Lane, in the city of London.

In the second edition of *Holinshed's Chronicle* several sheets were cancelled by order of the Privy Council, as containing objectionable matter in reference to certain delicate subjects in the reign of queen Elizabeth. But these castrations were in

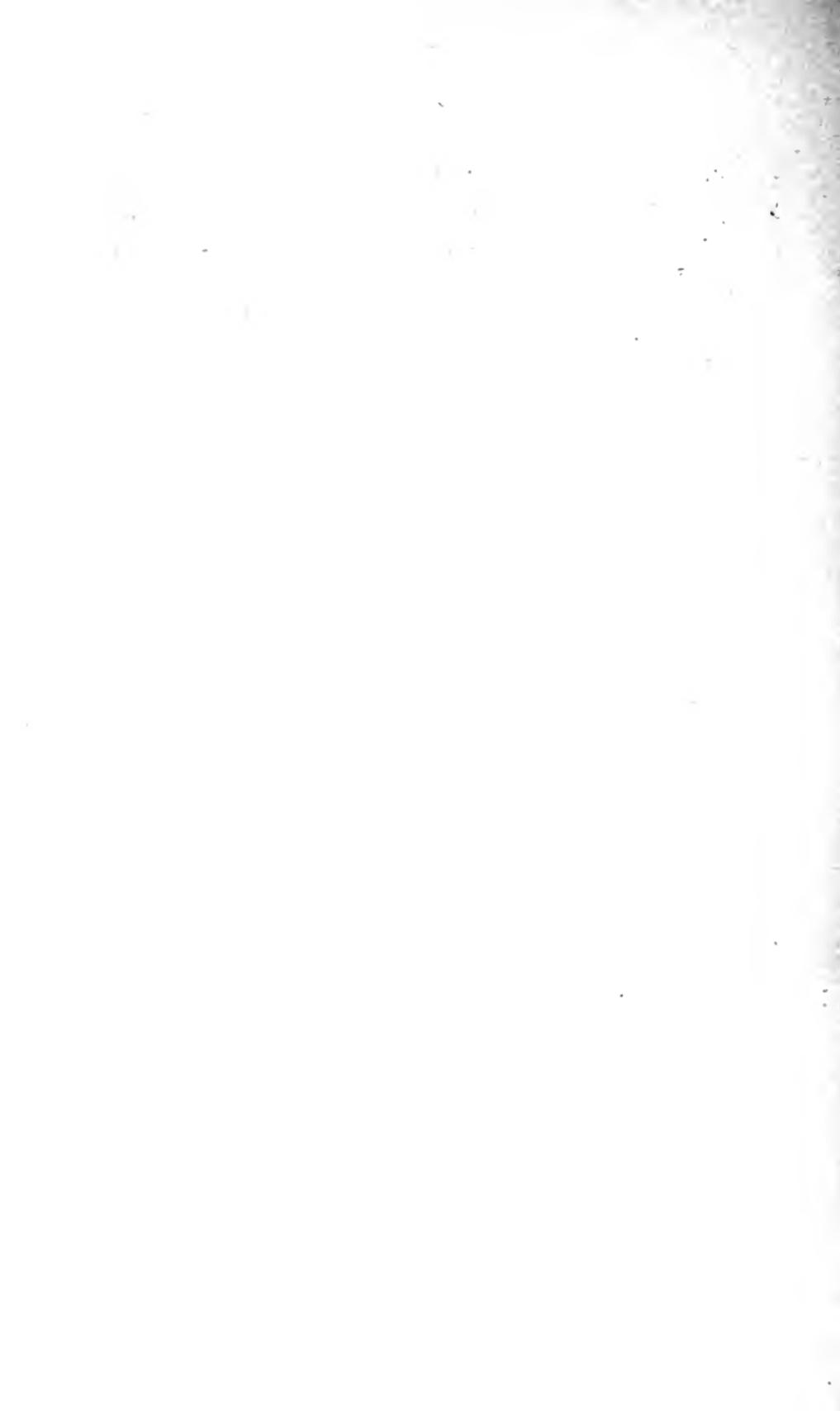
the last century collected and published by themselves in black letter, similar to the original edition with which they are now often bound up.

It was from the pages of Holinshed, and of his predecessor Hall, that Shakespeare derived the materials of his dramatized histories. And it may be remarked that, besides the play of King John, which stands by itself, those dramas form a regular sequence, covering exactly the same period as *Hall's Chronicle*—from Richard II. to Henry VIII. —broken only by the dark mysterious interval of Henry VII.'s reign, which afforded no good subject for representation on the stage. With this exception the whole period was full of action, and the wonderful pathos of its great catastrophes—a pathos which deeply touched the nation's heart, and is strongly marked in the narrative of Hall—was exemplified as it could have been by no other pen. Poets, indeed, had been labouring at the theme, even in the days of Queen Mary, and the *Mirror for Magistrates*, which first saw the light in the very beginning of Elizabeth's reign, bore testimony by its popularity to the depth and universality of the sentiment. It was the work of several hands, framed on the model of Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*; and as edition after edition appeared throughout the whole reign of Elizabeth, the public seemed never tired of reading monologues put into the mouths of unfortunate great men who had come to a tragic end in the midst of their prosperity. But though the poetry was far

from being contemptible (Sackville, Lord Buckhurst contributed some of his most polished verses), and though the subjects were taken from English history since the days of Richard II., such a mode of treatment could not compare for a moment with dramatic representations of the same facts by the hand of the great master. It is from the dramas of Shakespeare that most of us derive, even at this day, our chief impressions of English history ; and those dramas were undoubtedly composed from a very careful study of the writings of Hall and Holinshed.

The Tudor era, with all its despotism, was on the whole a period of national prosperity and happiness. It contained, certainly, enough of the evils of past times—enough of cruelty, oppression, and wrong-doing, to impress men with awe and with lively sympathy for the victims of state tyranny. But, at least, the wrong-doing was no longer capricious ; feudalism was at an end ; the country, from one extremity to the other, was under a single rule and government, no longer liable to be disturbed by the ascendancy of some new faction among a turbulent nobility. The improvement was so great that men could look back upon the past with a sense of devout thankfulness ; they could collect its annals, moralize upon them, dramatize them. And in the altered conditions of literature, what they had to say was all the more significant of popular feeling. For though the monasteries were gone—those secure retreats

in which the deeds of despotic kings had once been freely canvassed, both in speech and writing—their extinction only contributed still more to that unity of national life and sentiment which the extinction of feudalism had done so much to effect. The records of the monks were now centralized in the city ; the facts of history were discussed in a larger atmosphere. Local traditions and recorded incidents, known hitherto within narrower limits, had become the talk of men in streets and taverns. It was in London alone that men could gather all the knowledge that was to be obtained about the past. It was there that the contrast between new and old times was best understood, and the value of a stable government best appreciated. It was there, too, that literature was now domiciled ; the printing press had made it dependent on commerce in a way it had never been before. And it was in the earliest period of its new career—in the days of the Tudors and the Stuarts—that literature produced the most elaborate of English histories, and the most historically-minded of English poets.





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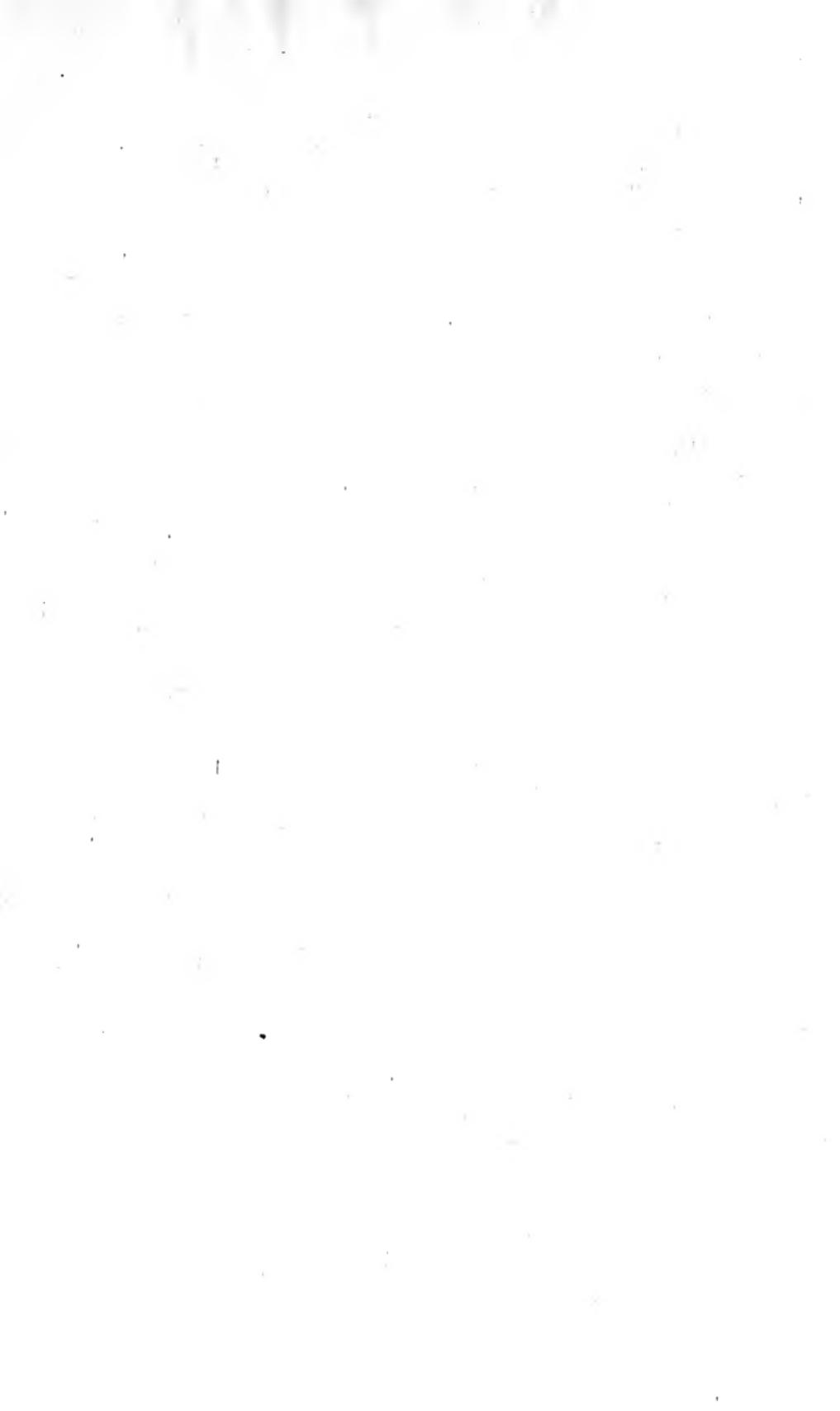
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